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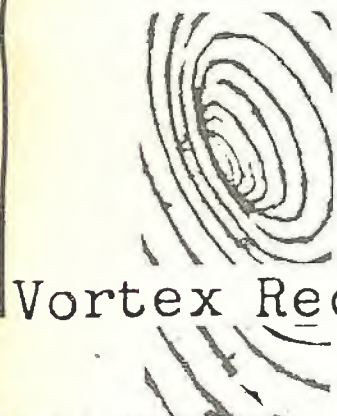
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MUSIC IS THE BRANDY OF THE DAMNED: lyrics to the song

I wrote his song tucked away with the idle rich in Ontario's Muskoka Lakes region. I was reading E.P. Thompson's magnificent: The Making of the English Working Class and as you all remember in the 2nd chapter he discusses the relationship of the Dissenting Churches to the rise of Workingman's class consciousness and social radicalism. ^ And then I bethought me of The Artist.

Music is the brandy of the damned  
Music is the sex of the unmanned  
Music's the rockcandy of the soul  
Music--will it make you whole?

Music is the thrasher in the wry  
Music is the truth within the lie  
Music is the bite within the kiss  
Music--O can't it bring you bliss!

Music is the present in the past  
Music is eternal--(but) will it last?  
Music is the answer in the moon  
But the devil got the best of tunes.

Fade: Music is the brandy of the damned  
Music is the sex of the unmanned  
Music is the candy of the soul  
Music but will it make you whole?

used by Shaw in  
Man & Superman -  
is it his?

I didn't find  
it at all in:

NAT SHAPIRO's: An  
encyclopedia of quotations  
about music. Doubleday  
1978. over 2000 entries  
a great book.

Tuli Kupferberg

"Why should the devil have all the good tunes?"  
Rowland Hill (The elder)  
1744-1833

Just found this by chance:

"Good singing is often wearisome"  
French proverb, c. 1498.



The dancer's body decays....

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# shades

It may be that the only fit teachers never teach but are artists, and artists of the kind most blankly masked and least didactic.

Footnote in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*,  
by James Agee

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There are only two facts I acknowledge as such. You are born and you die. What happens between — well, that all depends. It's a whole other matter though of course it may be what (in fact) most concerns us.

These aren't truly deep thoughts, but as I was sitting around all last night — indeed all this past summer — as usual not writing this "editorial", sort of trying to put a few things in perspective, not a whole lot occurred to me. "Does that mean something's wrong?" I was asking myself. Something more than the feeling of not getting far; or the feeling it's our turn to test on our pulses what Depressions can be, even if we have practised our poverty well and don't think in the end it can make that much difference.

I was trying to figure out why in the past weeks I'm feeling more hopeful. It had to be more than just starting again, like a new term in school. More vaguely, I thought it might be something more than the fact that this issue, by instinct and then by accretion, was in part based around that most literal new start in new life itself. In a new (not just "my") generation.

Then a friend called to tell me that someone was dead. He was someone we'd both known a little; an artist, songwriter, musician. Like Jane Vesey, Jack Chambers, he'd been in remission from some form of cancer. I began to consider: it seemed I could think of a number of artists who'd had "extra" time, who had used it up knowing what most of us don't, that their particular end was in sight and was only postponed and in some sense a gift. It could be that I just know more artists than most, or that those are the stories we all tend to hear. Still that isn't the point.

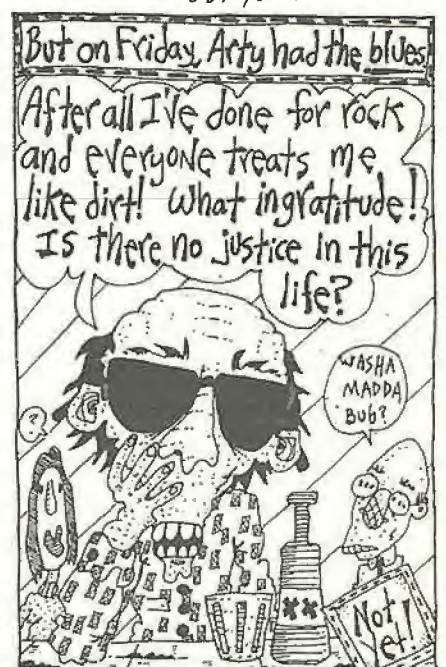
I'm not sure that there is one — a "point" like a lesson to labour and learn — except that I finally did think something else while I walked around picking up pieces of what you are holding right now, feeling tired of myself, and excited, at making the effort of that final push. It went something like this: look, the culture we care about (all life itself) is at best just an episode. It is also at all points definitive, in that it's part (insofar as it's whole) of what has gone before and of everything else and what might yet be coming. Of what we might make if we don't blow it (up). Or rather, if they don't.

Now I don't think that means much of anything special, specific or (least of all, self-) important. It does mean making choices and getting on somehow with all that we can do as well as we're able. Yes, I know; these are clichés. But they're that way for reasons, some good and some bad. For once I'm just glad I remembered them.

For original thoughts you should likely look elsewhere, which I hope you will do because finally again, this one's over to you...

no "Morning Hangover" from habit-forming drugs!

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# MYTH TAKES

Well it may have been a long summer but you won't find Rosy complaining — just Ruined.

It started, I guess (it's so hard to remember as far back as when the last issue appeared!) with that wild, whacky outburst of street life and unplanned — unplannable — public relations on the day and the night(s) the whole world turned **Italian** in its loving Cup. I would say that from there was not a whole lot until up to September and the **Sardine Soiree**, of which (enigmatically) more on page 6. But that would miss a lot and would lead you to think that poor Rosy's become not just boring but bored. And good heavens: forbid!! I don't know where to start.

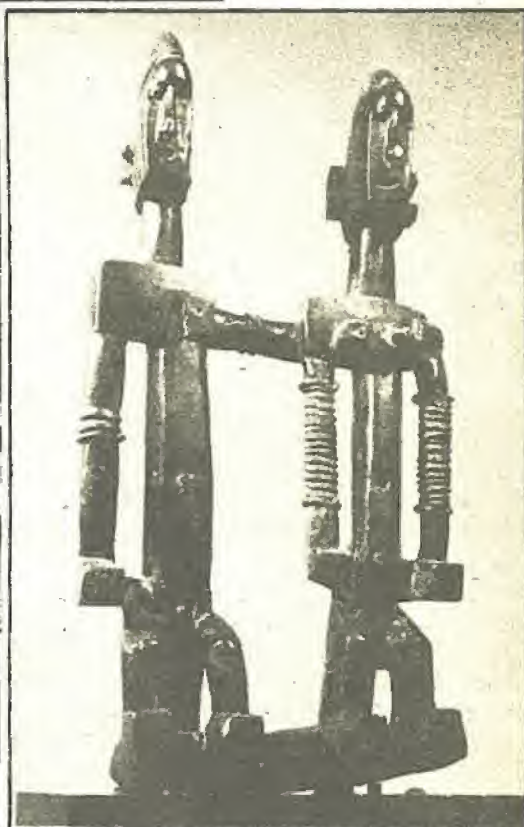
For one thing, I can do a real column of stuff like a wedding announcement (the party for **Marien Lewis** and **Johnathan Barker** at Theatre Passe Muraille was one of this summer season's sensations) and congratulate people on having their babies: in the family of sorts, **Debbie Shady**, our typesetter and T-shirt girl, had a girl prematurely, while if you've been wondering whatever-happened-to, **Michael Jordana** had hers and **Doug Pringle's**. Coming soon — February — is **B.B. Gabor's**; break your hearts, girls. Then the month after that our own **Peter L. Noble** is having a book, **Future Pop**. Of course, in the middle of all this good news there was also some bad. Not everyone's getting it on altogether and **Tony Malone** took his last **Drastic Measure** — disbanded. He was overheard saying he thinks he will travel ("I've never been anywhere!"). For those near-hits we'll miss there's a dozen new bands. Among those I've heard rumours about as worth watching are **Mickey Skin's** latest, **Girl War**, **Stolen Property** and the **Rock Hudsons**, while even **George Higton's** been surfacing lately, which is sort of a rebirth.

There have been some exceptional record releases, with the usual parties to get them well started. Of particular note ('cause I bothered to go) was the one for **Marianne Girard/Sailor Records'** debut **When It Hurts** and it didn't. In fact it was fun and I liked the whole band and especially the two of them I've heard before, with the likes of **No Frills**. I don't see any reason why this combination of women and men (three of each) and pop, rock and "new wavish", whatever that means, should not represent what has happened so far and then take it all farther. Still, it's not compromising or trendy; in other words, don't say I said this, I've been wrong before. The world just may ignore it, as it's tended to do with the other release that I would like to herald with something like fanfare, **The Extras'** new **Road To Zambando**. Their party featured a belly dancer no less, and it wasn't too tacky. Neither was it as fetchingly fey as a show by — and I hate to mention this 'cause it's one reason this band is so often and badly mis-rated, and damned with faint praise by the critics — well, let's say by **Kid Creole**. Or **Bob Hope** and **Bing Crosby** and somewhere between these is where they are aiming, I guess, and (thank God) they land somewhere outside it. Where that is is not always a novelty nor just an act. It's smack dab in the middle of where good songs come from, wherever that is, daily life or exotic locations, different rhythms and carny-type keyboards, hooks and chords that go minor. Their shows always feel pulled together — that's in fact what they are — the idea of being (and using) **The Extras** to make ad hoc bands is not easy or even in any event. For myself, I find things to be grateful for every time out, while the permanent records (aforementioned) and also the album **Spare Parts** keep me happy between times.

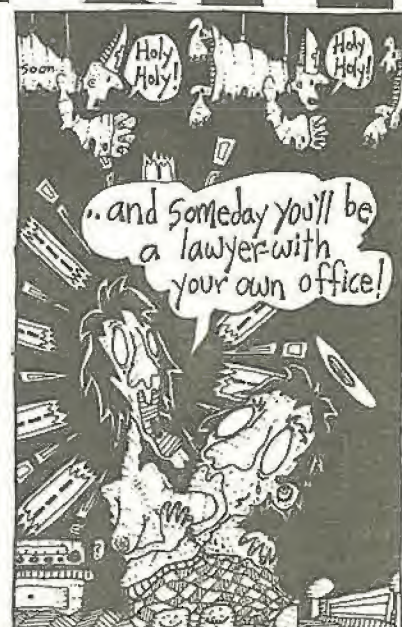
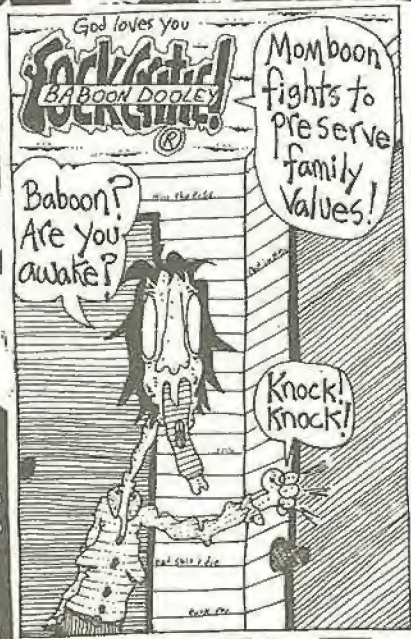
Released lately or soon — I will go the parties, perhaps, if invited and tell-tale all later — are, whew, what a list! **Martha and the Muffins**, now on their own label, **Current**, a new album called (tentatively) **Lush Life**. A new single and album both called **Arias and Symphonies** by **The Spoons**, still on **Ready** but now also worldwide released, **A&M**. **Johnny Dee Fury's** self-produced **Born to Bop**, picked up for now by **Orient/RCA**. An album from **TBA** imminent, now that they share a manager (ex-Muffin **Carl Finkle**) with **The Spoons**. **Nash The Slash** has a new LP coming soon, too; and he's opening for **Iggy Pop** on the whole North American tour. Of particular interest this ish, **Breeding Ground** have a 4-track EP on **Mannequin** due this October, which includes **Underground**, **Wintergarden**, 2 others. And the **Rent Boys** have a new single out now, called **Pictish/No Grat**. **The Payola\$** have put out a 12" of **Eyes of a Stranger** and the unreleased **Soldier**, and they're coming back soon to headline a concert in town (as are **The Spoons**, having finished their stint of recording their vocals in England and playing extensively round college circuits). **L'Etranger** have a 12" EP, **Killing Joke** put a **Live** from Larry's LP in the can when they went through here last — well I'm sure there's lots more. Who says this has been, or continues to be, a Depression? Or that this is no time to invest? Whether this is the smart money talking — we'll see. If they'd only buy ads...

But before I start whining again, or explaining in lieu of your editor why this one's late, as though that would change what you might have expected, I will mention in passing that there was a demo for **Ivan Jirous** (see **Performance/Events**), in Ottawa late this September, and that I think this one is an issue we'd all better do something about, which is little enough, but may set some of our small-change stuff in perspective. After all, if I have to appear next to trivial mutterings re. life, death, infinity, "art"; and on top of a tasteless cartoon that I love and just had to find room for; well, the point is I don't just give up. In despair, an excess of high spirits or mere satisfaction.

What's more, you shouldn't either.



By Rosy Ruin



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F. POMPEII





Scene here, the Sardine Soiree, Coming soon, the 3rd 24 Hour Gallery, Nov. 20 at 103 Amelia Street, 9 pm.  
Brought to you by the Chong, Millionaire's Society, Friends of the Humpback Flute Player and the Stupid School.



by Mark Leach

1. "I'm timeless." — Nina Hagen.

2. Nina Hagen was born in East Germany in 1955. She became a hippie in 1968 and also had her first religious experiences that year. She became increasingly radical during the 1970's under the influence of Wolf Biermann and other activists. During this period she studied singing at the Studio For Music Entertainment, training an already compelling voice until it became a precision instrument. She worked as an actress on TV and as a singer with pop bands, eventually becoming a huge popular success and a star, at least by East German standards. Biermann, who had assumed the role if not the title of her step-father, was deported as an undesirable in 1976 and Hagen was allowed to leave soon after, having already been turfed out of the Communist Youth Association for her links with Biermann and other dissidents. She lived in England for a time and became a close friend of Arianna of the Slits who introduced her to the principal players in the nascent English punk scene. She lived in Holland too and became involved with the radical No-Name commune in Amsterdam and with Holland's rock superstar Herman Brood. More recently she lived with musician Ferdinand Karmelk and he is the father of her child, a girl named Cosma Shiva. Nina Hagen now lives in America and continues to record for CBS records, who have released three albums to date: **Nina Hagen Band**, **Unbehagen** and **Nunsexmonkrock**.

3. "I am on my way to becoming the first superwoman, the first female Buddha. That is to become like Jesus, then you can walk over water and heal sick people in the name of Jesus." — Nina Hagen, *Sounds*, July 3, 1982.

4. Nina Hagen and her band played three nights in Toronto at Larry's: a Tuesday, Thursday and Friday with the Wednesday off so Hagen could rest her voice. Early on the Tuesday evening I went to the soundcheck in order to set up an interview, but Hagen didn't come to the club until the show started. Instead I talked to Julianna, Hagen's film and video director and the closest thing she has to a day-to-day business manager right now. Between us we agreed Thursday afternoon would be the best time and that the interview would be at Hagen's hotel.

The Victoria Hotel is a rather innocuous looking structure, sandwiched between other buildings near the foot of Yonge Street. It is not a particularly splendid or expensive hotel and I had never heard of it before. The band hated it, and said so to Julianna. She convinced them to stay at least that first night before moving to other more expensive accommodation by saying that Hagen loved the hotel because it reminded her of Berlin. The guys in the band responded that they thought it was more like the Soviet Union, but they stayed. The Victoria is, in fact, a European style hotel with one old cage-style elevator and public washrooms and shower facilities down the hall for most suites. When I found Hagen's room I asked her about Julianna's statement that the hotel reminded her of home. She said no, she hadn't seen much resemblance. I noticed that her room was spacious, unlike those shared by the band, and that she had her own bathroom. I began to suspect that Julianna had learned a few tricks from Hagen's former management firm of Glotzer in New York.

5. Nina Hagen is charming and talkative but not really what could be classified as an easy person to interview. Her mind darts about quickly, like a child who has difficulty thinking of more than one thing at a time and makes up for it by not thinking about anything for very long. Hagen believes that we should all think less and pray more. With her strong accent and less than complete knowledge of English coupled with her almost constant smoking of the herb, talking to Hagen was equivalent to interviewing the average Jamaican reggae star. Just as well, therefore, that this was not a one on one interview because Hagen would wear out any writer working alone. One reporter was already there when I came in and another writer and photographer arrived later. We took turns asking our own favorite questions and Hagen kept handling them with ease, changing the subject when it suited her and ignoring questions occasionally. I began to feel that we were marauding Indians uselessly circling a wagon train and that our questions — whether they were shot, pitched, rolled or trickled towards Hagen — were hitting the mark about as often as the Indians' arrows did in all those western movies. This is a typical example: *Shades* — "Do you think you'll have more children?" Nina Hagen — (whispers chidingly) I don't think. God knows. *Shades* — "Would you like to have more children?" Nina — I don't like, I love. *Shades* — "Ok, would you love to have more children?" Nina — I love children. *Shades* — "I'll take that as a yes."

But there was good humour throughout the room because we were all fans of her talent and when we asked for autographs at the end she

applied herself to the task with delight. She said, though, that she didn't ask people she admired for autographs. "When I met David Bowie I didn't say give me an autograph, I said give me a kiss!"

6. "I'd had a hit with a German marching song that I'd done as a piss-take, so I showed up first on TV in East Germany with a band of longhairs, guys, and I was really freaky dressed and suddenly we were number one band. And then I did many kinds of things, galas with orchestras, a show at the Entertainment Palace in East Berlin where they have ballet and many artists from foreign countries. I was singing *I Never Say Goodbye* by Gloria Gaynor (laughter) and *Motion Man* by Tina Charles and *Nashville City Limits* from Tina Turner. I was writing songs then but they'd didn't allow me to sing my own songs on TV. It's like a censor, you have to give them the lyrics and they have to say yes or no.

*Shades* — Did they ever say yes to one of your lyrics?

Nina — Yes. One. It was about sneezing and being ill and have a cough and laying in bed and waiting for the boyfriend to bring some candy.

*Shades* — Why did you decide to come to America?

Nina — I didn't decide. I didn't decide anything. It was God decides everything I do. It was because I was in love with a junkie (Ferdinand) and I brought him to a hospital in Sussex, England. And afterwards we wanted to go somewhere new. And we had management for us, typical American management, Glotzer, and I signed a stupid contract."

7. "The reason I didn't do an lp for so long is Glotzer management and CBS, they were fighting over some stupid contract. I was sitting there with these wonderful ideas and wonderful musicians

Carl Racker on bass are an impeccable foundation and Steve Shift on guitar has a brittle style and the all-important faddish haircut. On keyboards is Richard Sohl who is well remembered by all fans of the late Patti Smith Group. Bassist Racker, who is the only one of this band to play on the last album, has an intriguing habit. In one break between songs early in the set he changes the bass from his natural right hand playing position to a backwards left hand position and plays it upside down — equally well — for the rest of the song before switching it back. He does it again later in the night. I am totally unable to come up with an explanation for this action. Maybe Somebody Up There spoke to him?

The band play *Antiworld*, *Smack Jack* (for which there is a fine video), *Taiitschi-Tarot*, *Dread Love*, *Future Is Now*, *Cosma Shiva* and *UFO* all from the new album, plus *African Reggae*, *My Way*, *Satisfaction*, *Glory Glory Hallelujah* and a lovely straight religious version of *Rivers Of Babylon*. Hagen dances a bit on the limited space of the club stage but saves most of the gyrations for her voice, which can soothe or irritate and provoke either love or hate not only within the confines of one song but within a single phrase or even one word. They give us a long set and two generous encores, then the whole band links arms and bows to the audience in the manner of a theatre company. In truth, Nina Hagen uses her face almost as much as her voice to put across the songs and she is an actress as well as a singer. She is really doing cabaret. She compares herself to Marlene Dietrich and Hildegard Knef. In twenty years she could still be doing it, maybe in Las Vegas or on TV.

9. Nina — (glances at the TV set which is off, and says) Archie Bunker.

## NINANIITIES



P.L. Noble

and always Glotzer would go to CBS and say she's not ready, she's pregnant. I would love to have it when I was pregnant, it would be the holiest record in the whole wide world. But he went to CBS and said I act crazy in interviews and only talk about God and religion and Jesus. And those are the reasons he splits, because I went out of my mind, I'm a crazy bitch, I smoke pot all day long and I don't take that amount of cocaine like he does. All those pigs! All those pigs gonna burn in Hell when they don't let me do what I want to do, because it's the will of God that I have to do many albums. CBS even stopped pushing the album (**Nunsexmonkrock**) because of Glotzer. That guy is ruled by the devil, he's trying to destroy my career. But now we are getting good reviews, now we're sending good interviews to CBS so they can see that Glotzer is a big liar. I have to clean up all my past, I have to show I'm pure. Now I always visit CBS office wherever we are and show that we are touring and doing well without Glotzer management because Jesus is our manager. I hope CBS will understand that I am outrageous talent and that everybody wants me. I don't know. CBS is a stupid Babylon company. (laughter)."

8. Nina Hagen is in her element onstage, but then Nina Hagen is always in her element. Maybe Nina Hagen is an element.

Hagen has gone through an extraordinary number of musicians in her bands; as she says, "I was always waiting for the right guys and I was always firing the wrong guys." But there's nothing wrong with the band she has now, who are worlds away from the hack session musicians she worked with when she started. Paul Baker on drums and

11. "In the Tibetan death book they say when your soul goes out of your body from the ears then you go into a sphere where they dance and sing forever. I think I've arrived there. I think the last time I went out of my ears and next time I have to go out of my front and then I can go to God. All my music is inspired by God. By G O D, make a pyramid out of God. Don't write God only like a word like you would write any other word, write God like a pyramid.

"Herman (Brood) also came out of his ears last time and that's why he has to sing every day. Herman is what you call a real rock star. He went through so much shit and he's still playing everyday somewhere. He was a big star in Holland and then afterwards he fell down totally and nobody wanted him anymore and he doesn't care as long as he can make music. He's not on smack anymore, he's off it for one year now.

"Sometimes I think I'm alone in this world. And then I think...then I start to think and that's wrong, because there are more of us. So I'm not alone. Even though I think it sometimes, I know I'm not alone. David Bowie said that to me on one of his records, he said it directly to me, and I stole it from him and put it on the *UFO* song. We are all one. I just wish that in Germany they would understand that it's the same everywhere, the same pattern I mean, the same thing. We are all one.

*Shades* — Do you have good memories of Berlin?

Nina — I love Berlin, I love East Berlin and West Berlin, I love every soul in Berlin and there are many people in Berlin who love me like that too. I haven't been back in years so when I go to Berlin they're gonna come and kiss my feet (laughs). We gonna have a big party, a big laugh party."

12. There was an interview with Nina Hagen on CITY TV's news that same week that covered all her favorite topics: God, UFO's and the god-people who inhabit them, and herself. After it was aired the two anchorpersons leaned back, shook their heads in bafflement and uttered their decision on Hagen's sanity, "E.T. phone home." They seemed impressed by their own wit.

But despite Hagen's frequently wild statements, she is not in danger of being classified insane. Prior to meeting Hagen I was convinced that her story of seeing God in a vision and being chosen by Him for a special purpose was a publicity ploy. After an hour with her I came away certain of her sincerity and sanity, although I can't say that I saw any signs of encroaching divinity about her either. But then I'm an atheist.

One final note before Hagen gets the last word: for the first time in two years my tape machine failed to record properly and Hagen's voice is a barely audible presence next to the recorded music that it should have wiped out. (Which is why her famous Los Angeles UFO story is not here: I couldn't decode it.) It was a problem with the tape machine of course, or with the tape. But when you listen to that wavering disembodied voice talking about God, it's easy to imagine that, like a quasi-vampire who sees only a dim reflection in their mirror, Hagen could be in mid-transformation to a less temporal plane, as she believes herself to be.

13. "Jesus was the son of God. Jesus was a Buddha on Earth. He was one of them. I hope I gonna be one too.

*Shades* — I thought you already were?

Nina — (a very long pause, so long that another question is asked before she smiles shyly and answers me) Maybe. I hope so. I feel something very close to God. (something indecipherable). I already asked Steve Strange if he was the new messiah (laughter).

I wait for the religious revolution. I try to make everyone feel that we are children and that we are wild and that we are ruled by God and that God is the most fabulous thing in the world. All the other preachers are bad teachers and nobody wants to hear about it, it's like when you go to school and you have history but your history teacher is totally asshole and you don't want to hear anything from him. So I pray God for that He gave me the voice that I can go and tell them about it because I know Him personally from my first acid trip in 1978 and afterwards. So I know he is there all the time. And when we all want it, when we all believe it, then He can come. He is going to come again, many times. It's like David Bowie says, just for one day. He can show He is there and how it is. Even for three days or for seven days, just believe in it and it will happen, it just comes. But you have to give yourself, it's so easy.

*Shades* — Have you given yourself up totally?

Nina — Well, I could cancel the whole tour with that fucking voice (problem), but in the evening I go on stage and it's like nothing, it's totally ok, it's all in the head. I just have to pray, I say Jesus you are the magician of magicians, you can heal my voice in ten minutes. My voice gets thick in these smoky clubs but they, the god-people, they make their click and they can take it away. I, as a human being, shouldn't think that much, I should just pray because that's what I'm created for. Not to think."

10. From the Concise Oxford Dictionary: god 1. Superhuman being worshipped as having power over nature & human fortunes. 2. Image, animal, or other object, worshipped as symbolizing, being the visible habitation of, or itself possessing, divine power; an idol. 3. Adored, admired, or influential person. 4. (theatrical) Occupants of gallery. 5. (God) Supreme being, Creator & Ruler of universe (God, often the Lord God, Almighty God; God's (own) country, alleged description of the U.S. by Americans).



by Anita Mara Alksnis

Billy Idol is both the beneficiary and the victim of being handled by big-time U.S. management. The fact that Bill Aucoin managed Kiss is working against promoting Billy Idol, in some circles anyway. From critics in England, Canada and the States, to hip record stores, inverse snobbery is practised by putting down or trying to ignore the former punk with a new image and a new nation. This is the story of the man who went from making history in England to making, as yet, small waves Stateside.

Billy Idol was one of the Bromley Contingent which surely was the primordial essence of punk in England, and included the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie and the Banshees. He first joined Chelsea as a guitarist, but split with the core of the band. Billy and bassist Tony James left vocalist Gene October with just the name to hold on to. Billy became ideal as the spokesman for a new Generation X that had no respect for its mid-'70's predecessors.

The band went from gigging at the Roxy, to releasing revolutionary singles, to becoming internationally available with their debut album. It was an inspiration to music lovers all over the world, and had one of the leanest, meanest and prettiest covers ever.

The next vinyl product, **Valley of the Dolls** was eagerly anticipated but let down many critics and fans. It was different, and it was produced by an old fart, Ian Hunter. Good, bad, or indifferent, it was not "Punk Hits, Volume II".

From there Generation X was on a decline in popularity, but stayed relatively intact for the third album, **Kiss Me Deadly**. Billy and Tony James were really the nucleus, so they shortened the name to GenX when the band became a derivative. They made a fresh impact on the music scene with the single *Dancing With Myself*, a hit on the dance floor.

By this time Billy Idol was getting all the attention, being the one constant recognition factor in the band. So, for whatever reasons, it seemed a logical step to make it out there by himself. Logical; but it left a bitter taste with some fans. Here's where big-time publicity comes in. To many it seemed that Idol had deserted GenX as they made a come-back, using it as an opportunity to launch himself in the States with a fat cat manager. This "look what's happened to Billy Idol" attitude spread like wildfire. In reality, Aucoin had already been managing GenX for about two years so it was no big deal to stay with him as a solo artist.

The new solo album is another change, but obviously that's what makes Billy run. It's got a couple of calculated hits on it, including *White Wedding*, *Hot in the City* and *Shooting Stars*. The N.Y. influence is big, like on *Hot in the City*, where you might say Mink de Ville meets the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Despite this lapse, most of the album is very good and grows on you till it's familiarly danceable. Live, the material becomes more exciting. It seems the L.P. is a jumping off point for re-mixes and 12" singles. That is something to look forward to.

Living in New York for almost two years has had an effect on this British boy. I expected Billy to walk into a room as the scrubbed clean but punky-wave male model of his Canadian album cover. Or maybe the British version; darker and more menacing but layered in makeup. In fact he was wearing well-worn leathers and studs, gloves, and no makeup or even plastered hair. Just like in the old days! He's maintained the rough English accent which will never allow him to be assimilated into the American Way. It really comes as a pleasant surprise to see and hear the reality of Billy Idol today, and more astounding, to understand it. As I look back through vintage copies of *Sounds*, *N.M.E.*, *Melody Maker*, et al, it's refreshing to find that Billy Idol has been saying the same things all along. It's the press and the star-maker machinery that's caused the jaded apprehension.

"We wanted to express the high energy everyone was feeling. The idea of chaos was appealing. But now, well, we've gotten over that stance. It was needed at the time to waken everyone up, like a knock in the face. But, overall, that kind of stance doesn't help anyone else. The new wave bands were denying other genuine feelings they had, like love. We're starting to sing songs more in that vein."

BILLY IDOL, SEPTEMBER, 1978.

#### ANITA MARA ALKSNIS INTERVIEWS BILLY IDOL

SHADES: How do you find life in N.Y. compared to London?

IDOL: Well, it's like love/hate with N.Y. cause it's revolting in the summer and I like it in the winter cause there's no sun; it's all dark and horrible and nasty. It's fantastic. I think N.Y. is really just a night city. In the day it's all rubbish blowing in your face, and sweaty and humid.

SHADES: Do you wear the kind of thing you're wearing now (leather gear)? Do people bother you for that?

IDOL: It's just shouting like, "hey man, ooh are you hip. Punk Rock. Don't stop. Alright. Where you going dressed like that, man, whooh!" N.Y. is so weird. I'm kind of used to pressure like that from England, cause England's got a different way of going about things. You get skinheads attacking this person and Teddy Boys ... so you get used to looking out for trouble. It sometimes really gets on your nerves; but that's about it.

SHADES: It will be interesting to see what kind of an audience you'll get at this gig tonight. A lot of people were looking forward to seeing you four years ago, but I don't know who will be there now.

IDOL: Well it's not that much different. It's not as if I've started doing all ballads; gone cabaret. If anything it's just as much energy as there ever was. The only difference is this is more new, in terms of the people playing in it. They're getting into it as much as I'm getting into living in N.Y. Even the guy who produced the record has never produced before much. There's nobody in it who's been around for years and we're all session musicians. Just like it said on the first GenX album: "No Session Musicians".

SHADES: Still, on the basis of your name you're still getting a certain crowd that are expecting certain things from you.

IDOL: Well the thing that *Dancing With Myself* did was it really opened us up to people who were willing to be almost non-prejudiced by the music. Instead of it carrying a name first and then hearing the music, all they did was hear the music and not even know who it was. For instance, down the dance clubs and that, they just hear it and dance to it, so it cuts prejudice down. They can't just say, "Oh, I hate that group". That's what people usually do. They pre-judge things. I still retain the old people. They're still coming cause they know it's the same type of thing.

SHADES: I was looking at old books on punk I have from '77-'78, and I found some interesting quotations. One from you was, "Everyone expects the singer to be an idol. You know, always be in the centre of the photo. I'm an idol. I go home by bus."

IDOL: Well I take the subway now. Nothing ever changes dramatically like people think. It's only arseholes who think that driving about in a limo is actually fantastic. You just feel like you're in a bubble with people looking in. It's like Tom Wolfe says, "a status-sphere". They ain't got class in America. They've got "status-spheres". He's dead

WHAT MAKES

BILLY RUN?

right. People look into this bubble, thinking it's special, but it just feels like a fish-bowl if you're in one. It's horrible. I'd rather drive a motorcycle. I don't like people who evaluate things by those sort of conditions like, "You've got a limo. Wow! You're really happening!". It's what's in your head that's happening. And having a big car doesn't help you if you're a shit-head. You're probably just gonna drive it into a lamp-post anyway!

SHADES: Another quotation about GenX that I found was: "They looked menacing — short hair, aggressive stances and they were so fast. Power — that's Generation X. Even Jesus thought they were great!"

IDOL: Oh right, yeah! There used to be this guy Jesus. He was a real hippie. But he would come to anything, it didn't matter, and dance. He thought he was Christ. It's a bit funny to have Jesus Christ dancing to your music, innit? Can't be certain, what was he into for real? We're still just as fast and just as crazy. It's just that I needed new blood around me, just as much as I think the other people needed that. I don't want to get old and jaded and boring. I want to be excited myself, just like the audience. Some people won't think it's as good, and other people will think it's better. That's the risk you take with things like this. You have to sacrifice some things to get something else. I had to sacrifice living in my home country which was all nice and comfy. I know all the customs and what's going on. But it's more dangerous and exciting to go to somewhere that I didn't have a clue about. Lucky I had some people helping me out, but at the same time I hadn't got a clue about N.Y. or America really, only from what I've seen in movies. It's a bit like a movie anyway, but not like how you think. So it was just to try and keep the energy up and give myself a challenge. The challenge of GenX was there, but it wasn't happening so well anymore. So it was worth coming to take a risk. Unless you take a risk you never get anywhere.

SHADES: That brings me to the Bromley Contingent. What has happened to those people? What changes have they been through?

IDOL: We were all into the same kind of music, just a lot of friends. Everybody gravitated around the same sort of places. It was like a circus. There was a certain kind of, not an elite or anything, but a certain kind of knowledge between a certain few people. It got named the Bromley Contingent. In fact, everybody was on the same level. Pistols and everybody. There was hardly anybody into it, who had heard of the groups we thought were great.

Most of the groups were American like Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Velvet Underground, Suicide, Cramps. It's mainly American groups I like the most. We were all kicking about together. It got put like we were the Sex Pistols fans. Of course we were in a way, but at the same time we already had our own groups going. It's just that they got into the papers first. But they're still going strong: Siouxsie and Steve (Severin) got their band together. (Siouxsie and the Banshees. See SHADES No. 15). There's loads of people doing things. Other people have gotten into doing art work and stuff.

SHADES: Have there been any negative experiences? IDOL: Quite a lot of people have had a lot of trouble. It's another reason for getting away from England. You can get into certain troubles there at the moment that it's better to avoid. I just needed to get somewhere to meet new people so that I didn't become blank. There's this idea that by coming to America and playing to ordinary people, which is the biggest proletariat nation in the world apart from Russia, coming here is bad vibes for some English people, like you've sold out. In fact, what you're doing is selling in. There's that many people who are doing normal jobs. They're coal-mining, they're building fucking cars, they're on horrible treadmill existences. So if people think that by coming over here I'm a cunt, then they're wankers, cause I've actually come over and played to where punk rock should be. That's where almost the total work force of the world is. I did my bit for England. I did it for six years there. And they decided they wanted Spandau Ballet, and things like that. I can well understand it, they wanted a change. They've been through it. It's great to come here and play to these people. I don't understand this attitude. They think you've come here to make a load of money but it ain't like that. I've come here to get extra energy, have more fun, and play to a load of people who've never seen me. It's given them a chance to see something different. Look what's on the radio. At least we can hope to dent that a bit and get some new people in, whoever they are. I don't understand those sort of jealousies. I'm not like that.

#### ANOTHER FEW MINUTES WITH BILLY IDOL

transcribed by Anita Mara Alksnis

P.L. Noble Talks With Him About...

THE MAN BEHIND

THE IDOL

#### THE SPONTANEOUS EMERGENCE OF PUNK

The whole thing about it was that there were a certain amount of people who were into that sort of music so everybody got together. No one even thought they would get recording contracts. Nobody planned anything. Everybody killed themselves laughing when the Sex Pistols got a recording contract with EMI. We all thought it was funny. You know, EMI's going to have such a lot of trouble dealing with Malcolm and stuff. It was a joke. When we got ours it was even funnier. Oh my God, the whole record industry's going like the Domino theory. So we were just doing it for its own sake. We did it for *Now*. Surviving *NOW*.

#### THE STUDIO, THEN AND NOW

The first album was done in a garage more or less. It was a studio that had been made out of a garage. You listened back through stereo speakers like your home system and they were fucked up, you'd have to listen back through the blur of these speakers. So the early singles do hold up in a way. They've got all the energy, the way things were being done.

Well it's a few years on so you do learn a few things, like just exactly when they're bullshitting you in the studio, which you couldn't tell before. But it's still really the same thing. The idea is not to get bogged down in anything; be ready to change when it comes. Try to be aware of what's going on, but not take it too seriously.

#### THE BRITISH PRESS TROUNCING "VALLEY OF THE DOLLS"

It's just the British way. They do it by turns to everybody. **Valley of the Dolls** was a bit radical compared to the first album so I can imagine why they got a bit confused, the journalists. It was a different sound and I think they expected the second GenX album to be like the first. That's what started it all off. The last GenX album **Kiss Me Deadly** is really the second because it follows on from the first.

#### THE CREATION OF "WILD DUB"

Well I got into that because of Reggae and also because of things like Gary Glitter's **Rock 'n' Roll Part Two**. It's a dub rock record really and that's what we wanted to get into. It was also to learn just exactly how you can mess about with the sound of things. You can get a drum kit to sound like

anything if you want. What I've been doing with Keith Forsey with the disco mixes of new stuff, *White Wedding*, *Hot in the City*, is they're a bit more electronic but that's the way we were moving with Wild Dub. We're using the techniques of the studio. That's one thing that people always got wrong about what we were doing and what other groups at the time were doing. They thought that everyone was acting like a moron in the studio. Just thrashing it down and going home. But really most people think about what they're doing. Those sort of experiments were so that we can learn to move things on the board, mess about with the sounds. It was something we wanted to do so that we weren't hostages to the producer in the studio.

#### PRODUCER KEITH FORSEY

He was in a Psychedelic group, Amen Duul II. I used to listen to them on acid. I didn't know he was playing drums on it though. He also worked for Tamla-Motown and Georgio Moroder. It's almost like he was following the same path in a completely different way, going from something weirdly psychedelic. He's got the range of all those different types of music. He can understand when I want to do a different kind of mix, cause that's what they've been doing with all electronic music; they did it with Donna Summer, which he played drums on. He's been around doing that sort of music, yet he's into rock 'n' roll. It's the perfect mix for me. Martin Rushent is the same kind of thing. He started off with Rolf Harris, Shirley Bassey, and now he's doing Human League. He did Stranglers, Buzzcocks, us, and now this other thing.

#### TAX EXILES

No! What me? If I left England for tax reasons it's because they're hunting me down! I wish it was for tax reasons.

#### GROWING UP (MUSICALLY) IN BRITAIN

I gradually from the mid-sixties started to listen to The Velvet Underground and Iggy. Then Bowie came along doing a sort of cleaned up version but still great. There was Marc Bolan who was completely rock 'n' roll. Those were great times for growing up in England. We saw all the revolution that happened before us. They were the fore-runners of punk rock. When they died down, stopped doing it, the indignation started from young people. They had nobody. It was alright for Led Zeppelin fans. If you don't like Heavy Metal you're fucked cause there ain't no one else around. '75 must have been the slit-your-wrist year.

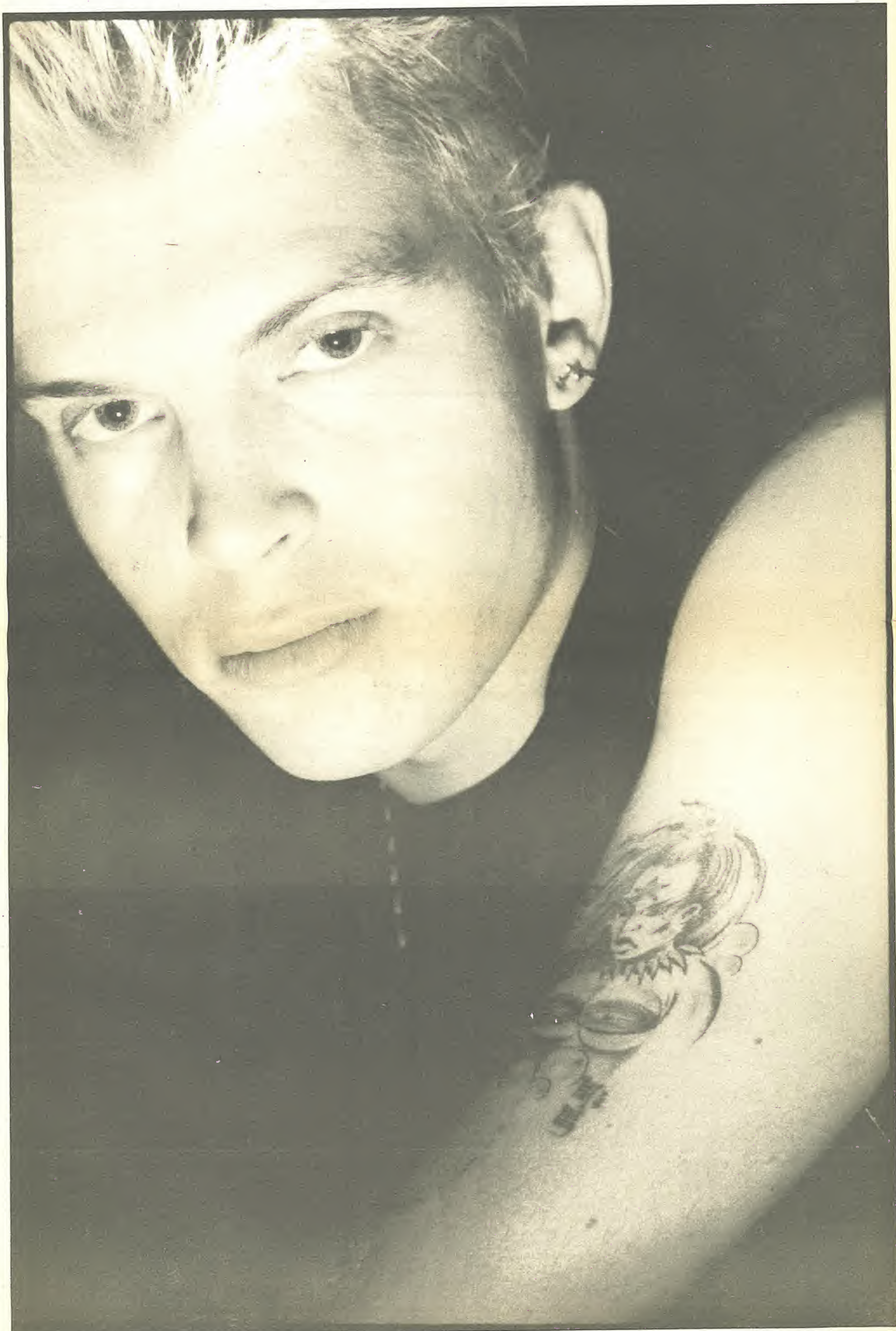
#### BRINGING THE REVOLUTION TO AMERICA

We started the musical revolution in England which happened in America but never caught on. We made it so that record companies had to keep their minds open to the idea that they had to sign new people. They've got to find new people otherwise they're killing their own music culture. That's one reason for doing it in America in this way. So that you approach people on their own level. You've lived there so you know why they're thinking certain things. Lots of groups say people are ignorant if they don't like what they're doing. Instead of thinking maybe they don't like it cause that's not happening to them. They're not going through that problem, they're going through this one. And if you can find that problem you can help them out. Whereas English bands are coming over here and singing about things that are happening in England completely. I think that's why the Clash started to do things in America, so that they could feel the culture and know who they're singing to. It's important. At least I can give them a chance to see something that is high energy but isn't limited to what punk rock was when it first started. Show them we broadened the barriers completely and opened it right up. It's wild. How many bands are there in England? Millions! All different, synthesizer bands, some that play violins ... New music from England is moving up the charts here and if I can be here to help stir that up we could create the same sort of thing. Bit slower, but it will happen. The Human League being number one, that's a really good chance for new music in Canada, America, whatever.

#### DISC JOCKEYS AND TALKOVERS

Hanging around N.Y. in the dance clubs you do get to know the D.J.'s cause they're playing your record, and they want to show you what they're doing to it. So it really got me more into the idea of re-mixing things, singles. I don't want to fill it up, I want to leave it. That's where I'll use my Reggae influences. When something's rolling along and it sounds different cause you've remixed it, a D.J. can slam a whole different record on and create his own music in front of people. It's not your music anymore. It sort of is, but he's made his own. I'd like to get nearer that, where people could take your song, take the better bits out of it, remix it, and sing something completely different over the top, and it's their song. It's a great idea. That's the 1980's idea of a D.J. for me, somebody who creates his own music with yours.





P.L. Noble, from the forthcoming book *Future Pop*



by P.L. Noble

Remember the days when there was "a scene"? Even (maybe especially) here? And out there in Vancouver? That's right, we called it punk (or pop) then — without getting embarrassed and mighty uneasy at keeping that company. *O mores, o tempora*: how things have changed.

For our purposes here, we can go back to '78, when a label called Slophouse was formed by two men who (with help from a series of friends) constituted Payola\$. Composer, guitarist and engineer Bob Rock and lyricist/vocalist Paul Hyde saved some \$1,000 to record their first serious demos. That effort resulted in their debut single release, *China Boys/Make Some Noise*. Looking back on those formative years, Rock and Hyde tend to giggle, confessing that they put it out as a lark. Fun, fun, fun. Daddy took the car keys away. That's what they all tended to say way back when...

On August the 6th of this year, two months after I'd talked to them, the Payola\$ went gold with their second full album, **No Stranger to Danger**, on A&M Canada. This follow-up to their 12" A&M **Introducing...** EP and debut LP, **In A Place Like This**, has taken them off the American I.R.S. roster and into a worldwide exclusive release deal with A&M. (At least) three things, besides their own talent and big-biz resources, would seem to contribute to this success story.

The first is the wide-ranging flex of their sound and their songs; from the reggaefied pop of such singles as *Eyes of a Stranger* to fast-paced excitement on *Rockers* and *Youth* to the skiffle/Latino-like *Rose* (the updated version) to folk ballads, too (in their enigmatic torch songs *Hastings Street* and *Pennies Into Gold*). The second — which might play a part in the first — is the series of personnel changes the band has been through. The line of bass players has gone Larry Wilkins, Garry Middleclass and Barry Muir. Present drummer Chris Taylor replaced Taylor Nelson Little. And, on the album and for a few shows, the keyboards were played by Mick Ronson, who also produced and is the third major factor of note. A certified rock personality, from his days as The Spiders From Mars lead guitarist and his *Saturday Gigs* with Mott the Hoople and his tour with Bob Dylan and ... well, it goes on.

SHADES met up with both the Payola\$ and Ronson when they opened for Split Enz at Massey Hall and played the Horseshoe. The first interview was conducted with Bob Rock and Paul Hyde. The second concentrates on Mick Ronson.

SHADES: Why do a group of the Payolas' calibre have to achieve success in another part of the country before they can be accepted in their own home territory of Vancouver?

HYDE: The people in the Vancouver scene criticized us right from the beginning. I think they never liked us because we never played around town very much, lack of material and so on. They thought we were studio musicians who put out singles for the fun of it. On the other side of the coin we were even being attacked by the straights. They thought we were punks because we put out a single when all the other hardcore groups put out their singles. We were nailed from both directions. Whenever we've performed in Toronto nobody's ever had any pre-planned conceptions about what we represent. They've always given us a fucking chance just by sitting down and listening. I mean, that's the way it has to be.

SHADES: Are you sure about that?

HYDE: Sure I am! If you lived in Toronto and you'd seen the Diodes 300 times you might lose your original perspective of what you felt the Diodes were all about when you first saw them. The same thing goes for Vancouver groups like D.O.A., the K-Tels and the Young Canadians. They were great bands. You'd see them 10 or 15 times, and even then they'd really have to put on a good show to make you notice that much more.

SHADES: Now that you've finally had a fairly successful album I was wondering if you consider your past works just as important?

ROCK: I produced the first album **In A Place Like This** so obviously I don't think it's that terrible! But seriously — what can you do when a good record stiffs? We were satisfied with it as a record but we didn't do that much touring to support it. The biggest push for it was probably the Police Picnic last year outside of Toronto. The album died because nobody on the radio thought it was good enough. I dunno, maybe it wasn't cool enough at the time for radio people to get into. There was one song in particular that never actually made it onto that album. It was entitled *Kill The White Man*.

SHADES: A&M probably got very paranoid.

ROCK: Some people at A&M loved the tune. They heard it before we went into the studio to record it and they really got excited about it. We couldn't include it on the first album because of Myles Copeland. He didn't want to release it because he felt it was too political. I mean, this is the same guy who signed the Dead Kennedys, and he thinks we're political?

SHADES: A couple of days ago I was looking over your debut album **In A Place Like This** and I was surprised to find Gary's Topp and Cormier mentioned in the list of credits.

ROCK: We opened for Chris Spedding at the Edge just around the time when our *China Boys* EP came out (early '79). The Gary's even put us on as the opening act for Jayne County. We did a mini tour around the Ontario region, and to be quite honest, we were terrible. We were never in the position where we could develop our act. Compared to the club scene that existed in Toronto, Vancouver was almost like a ghost town. The Gary's gave us a chance and they actually paid us. They were very kind to us. We've always appreciated that.

HYDE: I think we played the Edge longer than any other band, in one complete run that is. We opened gigs at the Edge for 2 weeks solid. We sort of begged them, 'Look, y'know, you don't have to give us much, but can we play?' They were great. They helped us with the lights and sound.

SHADES: One of the things I've picked up on while I've been listening to the new album **No Stranger to Danger** is an extremely strong fear element, musically and lyrically. Somehow I get the impression that you've just stumbled across the sudden realization that you're all grown up. Is Paul Hyde confused, shocked or just fed up with everything around him?

HYDE: It is a little autobiographical, yeah. I guess *Hastings Street* is the song that puts everything into perspective.



"Got no more heros/Looks like my future's a mess/There's people starving all over this place/Lines on my forehead running down my face/I didn't want to grow up this fast/I thought my fun would last/Now there's nothing left to shout about/Nothing worth dying for/There's no one here just me and my problems."

Hastings Street

If you're going to go low in Vancouver, Hastings Street is about as low as you can possibly go. Some people refer to it as skid row heaven. It's the perfect backdrop for whinos and bums. The city even went to the length of moving the liquor store out of the area in hopes of cleaning up the street, but it's still pretty rough. People keep getting their asses kicked in. Main and Hastings is a very shaky corner. If you actually go down there and sit in the bars you'll discover a different world from what's going on 3 blocks away. It's where the human spirit winds up when it loses everything around itself — hope, confidence, you name it.

SHADES: I noticed that you re-recorded one of your older songs, *Rose*, on the new album. The new version is beefier and much more polished.

HYDE: *Rose* has always been our favorite song. We decided to slow it down, bring up the vocals and add some organ. Chris, our drummer, has a terrific feel for that downbeat type of thing. We wanted to re-record it, not necessarily to put on the album, just to have it, y'know? It turned out so well that we said, "Well, alright, piss on it, we'll put it on the album."

SHADES: The new album features heavy rock, reggae, Latino and ballads — I mean, that's a wide range of musical styles don't you think? Are some of these musics new territory for the band or are they just influences?

ROCK: Sure, we're influenced by a lot of music. If anything, I don't think this band has to solidify a concrete direction or a concept.

HYDE: I think you're fucked as soon as you go in one direction. We've got everything in our record collections, from calypso to folk. Right now I'm getting into traditional folk music. I bought an album by this guy called Dick Gauchin called **Handful of Earth**. It's the best album I've heard, next to *Fun Boy 3*, all year.

ROCK: Do you know what I mean though? You're supposed to have fun with music. The band doesn't try to appeal to any one particular audience by saying, "Well, if this is what they want then we'll give it to them." We create the music and if it happens it happens. *Eyes of a Stranger* is probably the last thing we thought was going to be a single. We didn't try to make it a single. We just recorded it and everybody liked it. I think that's the way everything should be approached. It should be natural, not contrived.

SHADES: Both of you have been working together musically for quite a while now haven't you?

HYDE: We went to the same high school in Langford B.C. — Belmont High, the place where I spent the worst fucking years of my life!!

ROCK: As soon as we finished high school in '73 both of us went to England in hopes of becoming

changes. It seems as if the Payolas are Paul Hyde and Bob Rock and that's it.

ROCK: The only reason the drummer and the keyboardist that we had on the first album aren't with us now is that we wanted to do different things than they did. They're playing in other bands now. We're still friends. It's just that we had a different direction we wanted to explore. We needed the right people who were willing to try something new unto themselves. We didn't want musicians to play in a particular fashion just because they're in a band. We needed musicians who wanted to play because they enjoyed the ideas behind the music.

HYDE: We had the tools to do the job. The problem was that we needed a better set of tools.

ROCK: ...And we found them.

SHADES: I hate to put you on the spot Bob, but before you were going on about "having fun" with what you were doing with your music. Doesn't everybody say that when they're fairly successful? How would you feel if your recording deal fell through and you didn't have a hit single? Would you still feel the same way towards relating your music to fun times?

ROCK: When we originally got together for this tour, Mick had to fly in from New York and it wasn't like we were well rehearsed. Of course, the industry being like it is, that's the way they want to see you. They want to see every little move plotted. They want to see everything staged. We've just been getting better as we've been continuing, and to me that's the element that I prefer. It's just a lot more fun that way. (Here we go again — Ed.)

## PAYOLA\$ NI



big rock'n'roll stars. We ran out of money after 3 weeks. We managed to see quite a few bands. The funny thing was most of them weren't even signed to major deals. They were exceptional. I'll never forget how our faces dropped in dismay. I mean, we were really depressed. We had played music back home in Vancouver but these British bands really opened our eyes and ears. We realized that we had a lot of thinking ahead of us.

When we returned back to Vancouver we went to work in the mills. You name it — woodmills, pulpmills, sawmills, chicken slaughter houses, cardboard box factories ... You want to know about jobs? We did 'em. Paul even moved to Toronto to collect unemployment insurance for 9 months.

HYDE: The Beatles were a strong influence though. I don't know anyone who saw them for the first time that wasn't impressed. The same thing happened when I saw this video of David Bowie singing *Jean Genie*. Have you seen that video of everyone dressed in leather, hair's all greased, sporting winklepickers and black leather jackets? David was ahead of his time. The impression that it left on me was incredible.

The Sex Pistols' **Never Mind The Bollocks** made a similar impression on me. It was as if there was hope again. That was the last thing that made the Payola\$ take the big jump, the same thing that's kept us going on our own intuition instead of going back to those mills.

SHADES: For a group that's only been together for a few years I'm curious about the constant personnel

HYDE: I've been reassured on this tour about our ability to pull it off live a lot more. We've been doubtful in the past but lately I've been a bit more confident about that. The thing that's kept us going is we've never had any doubt that we could pull it off in the studio. I love being in the studio. Bob loves being in the studio. Both of us love making records.

It's really dumb sometimes but we tend to get a little nervous whenever we play Toronto. We tend to play flawless gigs in small places like Barrie, Ontario because they're usually very low key. When I'm in Toronto I get a strange feeling, which is quite stupid because it's just like the same bloody place we're going to play on Monday and the Monday after that. I think the more touring we do the more we'll be able to get over it. Yeah, it's one of my biggest fears, for the time being anyway.

ROCK: It's just like you said before we started this interview — you thought the show got a lot more exciting as the show progressed. Well, that basically sums it up. Once you get rid of that inhibition it becomes a lot of fun, and that's what the tunes are all about. Paul says a lot of serious things but it's still like *Whiskey Boy* and *Rockers*, 2 songs that embrace a positive and exciting atmosphere.

HYDE: We like rock'n'roll music, not moronic stuff. It's that fist in the air feeling that you get after you perform a good song.

SHADES: There's a part in *Rockers* where you scream "Never grow up/Some people want to rock their lives away," and I was wondering if you really meant it. No matter how you look at it, isn't it a rather self-



destructive and naive outlook?

ROCK: We're talking about staying young as in the spirit of rock'n'roll. It's an eternal thing really. If you really believe in something you've got to make up your own mind if it's right or wrong. Nobody's going to make your mind up for you. There's an expression in *Rockers* that says, "No escape, nowhere to go/Listen to the Y.C.'s playing on the radio," and it's our tribute to the Young Canadians (a Vancouver band). Success can happen to anyone. It's available. The thing is, you've got to know how to approach it realistically. HYDE: It's a mental thing. That's why I put *Rockers* towards the end of the album. The sentiment of that song should overpower the sentiment of a song like *Hastings Street*. There's always a threat of this impending mental transition as you're growing physically. You can sense the changes as you get a bit older. My teeth went on me about a year ago. I noticed something happened in me jaw. Suddenly everything went tight. I thought, "Fucking hell, is this what happens when you reach this age?" It's just like when osmosis sets in.

SHADES: You have a very strong British accent. What part of England are your parents from?

HYDE: Yorkshire. I lived there until I was 15 years old. I had sort of half puberty there and half puberty here. I've got this split you see?

SHADES: What do you think of the Maple Leaf?

HYDE: It's a very nice leaf.

SHADES: Will the Payolas produce themselves in the future or will Mick be coming back for a second crack?

had already engineered a couple of other albums (Loverboy's 2 albums to be exact) but ours was the fastest to record. It took us about 3 weeks to record and a week to mix down. It was recorded at a studio that I'm associated with in Vancouver, Little Mountain Sound. (Note — Bob won a Juno last year for his engineering work on Loverboy's *Get Lucky* album).

HYDE: Bob's got a lot of gold and platinum on his walls but we wouldn't mind a little gold and platinum for our own band.

ROCK: ...Which is a good attitude to take. Part of the Payola\$ represents some of the things I've learned in the past. Loverboy may not be my cup of tea, musically, but they're good people who believe in what they're doing. In terms of my production career, y'know, helping other Vancouver groups like the Young Canadians, the K-Tels and the Pointed Sticks is very important also. They've got an awful lot of talent and it shouldn't go wasted. (Note — Bob will be producing the Toronto-based Sharks debut LP).

SHADES: What's the current music scene like in Vancouver?

ROCK: There are a few promising bands happening. Moeve is an interesting group. I think they're going to be recording an entire album in San Francisco. They've already got a great EP under their belt.

Popular Front are also another tight group.

HYDE: "e" are pretty good. That's our first bass player's group (Gary Middleclass and his wife). A

SHADES: How did you come to produce a Vancouver band like the Payola\$? Did you phone A&M in Canada or did the group send you a demo?

RONSON: I received the demo for the first album a long time ago. It was someone in New York who originally gave me a copy of the demo for the 2nd album. At that time I was doing some work with Ian (Hunter). I ended up putting the tape in my bag and forgot all about it. It wasn't until much later when I pulled some cassettes out and started playing them in me car. One day I picked up the Payola\$ tape and decided to give it a listen. I quite enjoyed it. It sounded very clean cut and fresh. It was like the first demos that I ever made. I remember speaking with some A&M people in Toronto but I never mentioned the Payola\$.

One day I walked into the A&M offices in Toronto and I said, "Hi, my name's Mick Ronson." It was October of 1981 — I just wanted to have a look around. I asked them, "Is there anything you've got for me to listen to? Do you have any bands that need a producer?" They said, "Well, we've got this band called the Payola\$." So I said, "Not them again! Let me have it. Arrange a meeting between the band and myself." I ended up talking with Bob Rock on the telephone about the idea. He wanted to send me a copy of the latest demos but I told him not to bother. I wanted to go straight into the studio to start production. Next thing I knew A&M flew me to Vancouver.

SHADES: What initially gave you the inspiration to break out of your routine and produce a fairly unknown

own ideas. If I'm not allowed to express my feelings then I don't want to be involved. Ian and I are very dear friends. We always hang out together.

SHADES: What were some of the things you were trying to get across on *No Stranger*?

RONSON: I wanted to make the record more personal because it'll help the listener hear more personality in the music itself, rather than layers and layers of strings and things. I think this record has a certain charm about it. It sounds real. It's not a perfectly produced record. It's got a lot of personality to it.

We worked everything out together. I didn't walk in the studio like a little Hitler and force them into doing certain things. They're a young band. They have to be given a chance to grow. They also have to live with it. They have to feel comfortable with what they've done, otherwise they might not want to carry on.

SHADES: What types of music do you listen to — reggae?

RONSON: I like reggae but I don't really listen to it that much. I listen to a lot of folk music. I like Roy Harper quite a bit. Paul likes folk music too.

SHADES: I think a lot of people were surprised when you played keyboards with the Payolas when they opened for Split Enz in Toronto. Most people tend to associate your musical proficiency with the guitar.

RONSON: Everybody expects me to come out and rip me shirt wide open and play this heavy guitar all night long. I don't do that kind of thing. I mean, I can do that but there's a lot of other things I'd prefer to do. There's many different ways I can play guitar, too, which people won't let me do. "Oh, you can't do that! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!" What do they mean I can't do that? Of course I can do that. I can do anything I want to. I don't like people telling me what I should do.

Yeah, it's nice to be able to come out and play keyboards and not even touch the guitar. It's like, "Okay, here I am playing keyboards. You didn't know I could do that, did you?" Sometimes I like to go out as a drummer. I already know how to play the guitar. I want to do other things as well.

SHADES: Good for you. It's as if you're fighting against the stereotype that's built up for what Mick Ronson is supposed to represent. You must have really left one helluva impression on people when you played guitar for David Bowie ten years ago. Although at that time, you made a brave move and left Bowie to pursue other projects.

RONSON: Yeah. I mean, going from David Bowie to Bob Dylan was a really big change.

SHADES: I remember seeing you on that Dylan tour (the Rolling Thunder Revue). I'll never forget it, Joan Baez kept running up to you with hugs and kisses screaming, "Oh Ronno!"

RONSON: It's really healthy to do other things. I feel as if I've got other things to say in new areas. If I think I can play different instruments or work with new people, I'll do it. All the record execs come around to me and they always say the same thing, "Y'know Mick, you could clean up." I know I can clean up. I know if I were to put a real heavy metal band together, got me hair real blonde and got heavy with the guitar ... I know I could clean up. Why should I? What's the point in doing that? I could be a bit richer but so what? A lot of people think I'm an idiot for not doing it. Gimme a break. I think it's all down to experience. I'm not going to pack this in in 5 years. When I'm 60 years old or something I'm certainly not going to retire. You do it until you can't see, hear or walk. Take a look at all the famous writers, poets and composers — they didn't really come into their own right until they were 50 or 60. I've got a lot of years to go and I'd like to continue doing a lot of different things because the more you do the more you learn. One of these days I'll be able to spit it all out.

SHADES: Have you been working on some of your own tapes?

RONSON: I've been working on this really neat Scottish folk-type instrumental tape complete with authentic bagpipes. I've also recorded these Ennio Morricone — type songs. They sound very similar to a soundtrack for a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western.

SHADES: A Fistful Of Ronson?

RONSON: No, really it's true! When I'm at home I play that kind of stuff all the time. There's an awful lot of things I like to get involved with. I often play the most interesting stuff when I'm relaxing at home. I have a great solution. I tape myself when I'm experimenting. I enjoy surprises. I like to surprise myself as often as I can.

SHADES: Prior to the Split Enz/Payola\$ Massey Hall gig, didn't you drop in at Scuffer's to jam with Dick Duck and the Dorks?

RONSON: I felt like celebrating because it was my birthday.

SHADES: Do you mind if I ask you how old you are?

RONSON: 36. Listen, we were sitting around in the hotel and we just decided to get up and go out. We were looking through the newspapers and suddenly we came across DICK DUCK AND THE DORKS! We thought any band with a name like that had to be worth seeing. I had to check them out. They really got into these '50's numbers. I got pretty drunk.

## CK RONSON



Photos by P.L. Noble

ROCK: We definitely want to work with Mick again. Self-production is really neat and stuff but it's great to have that other person there. Mick is that perfect other person. He was a fifth member on the *No Stranger* album. He doesn't live with the music all the time so he's got a very objective outlook on everything. We're already talking about the next album. We're looking forward to it. We've got a lot of new ideas about different approaches.

SHADES: I guess having another viewpoint, an objective one at that, is a very important thing.

HYDE: You really have to carry that element. Chris Taylor, our drummer, was also a very big help on this album. We took in a lot of suggestions from different people to help broaden the songs. Sometimes we even surprise ourselves, and hell, there's no harm in doing that.

Mick made us relaxed in the studio and helped to establish a positive working atmosphere. On the first album I tended to sing songs where I'd do the melody the same way in every verse. On this one I just thought, "Piss on it, I'll just sing the way we do it live." I think we got a lot more expression and compassion in the vocals and the music this time around.

ROCK: Oh yeah, *Eyes of a Stranger* was only a demo. *Romance* is a demo we made with Mick over a weekend. We decided to hang on to it because we knew we weren't going to come up with anything better. *Hastings Street* was changed around completely. It was as if we decided to pull a lot of surprises on ourselves. It really made us think. I

drummer by the name of Barry Taylor also plays for "e". He used to play for the Young Canadians. He actually works with me when I do gardening. ROCK: There is a lot of great music being made in Vancouver. I'm afraid it doesn't happen fast enough. People usually don't hear about it.

HYDE: Before, everyone was very hot on making albums but I don't think they're interested in doing that anymore. The people who came from the scene have either given up hope or they just don't give a damn. They just want to play their music. Nowadays it's rockabilly and electronic music more or less. And then you've got your rock bands like the Payola\$. There's not that many of us left y'know.

### ENTER MICK RONSON

**"It's about time Canadians started being more forward about coming to terms with their own identity, and they should stand to use it. Take all of the Olympic gold medal winners for example — they usually aren't Canadian. They don't even make the best boxers in the world. I mean, the only thing they have going for them is hockey. It used to be the Mountie Police didn't it? Strange, I don't think they're around anymore."**

Mick Ronson, April '82



**MAEL-**

as quoted

"Our offstage personalities are very similar to what we're like in concert. I'm more outgoing, bouncier and talkative. Ron's much more pensive, moodier and intellectual about things. We really are the way we are in concert but it's probably more subtle in real life. By now we know each other's idiosyncracies. After a while you know what to say and what not to say. We're beginning to feel optimistic because things are starting to open up in the States a bit, but as far as radio is concerned, we're still considered to be something of a threat. We don't know what's bothering them. If we knew, we would have solved the riddle 11 albums ago".

— **Russell**

"There's never been anything calculated about Sparks. A lot of people wonder how we got our image. They always go on about how 2 brothers can look so dissimilar. I think that's why what we're doing remains fresh after 11 albums, for people that never heard Sparks and they're just hearing it for the very first time. The reason why it's so fresh is because we don't even know what we're doing."

— **Ron**

"Sparks has a really strong image, and quite often it works to our detriment. People tend to see this whole thing — what they imagine Sparks represents — more than actually listening to the music. This may sound stupid, but I even think Ron's moustache has been a hindrance to some airplay. To Ron it's just a moustache. A lot of radio people are afraid to play our music because they think he's got an Adolph Hitler fixation. It's ridiculous!"

— **Russell**





# STROMS

by P.L. Noble

"Ron writes about 99% of the music and lyrics. My name's on it just for various. I'm more of a consultant after he comes up with arrangements and ideas. People always ask us where we get our inspiration. What can I say? Some people have it and others don't."

— Russell

"I like living in Los Angeles knowing that I'm going to be leaving. The 2 places I like living are Paris and L.A. but I would hate to live in either of them for a long time. L.A. totally makes you without ambition. Everyone is so happy and spaced out. On the other hand Paris can drive you crazy because it's all style and no substance. Everybody likes to pose around as if they're French new wave film makers."

— Ron

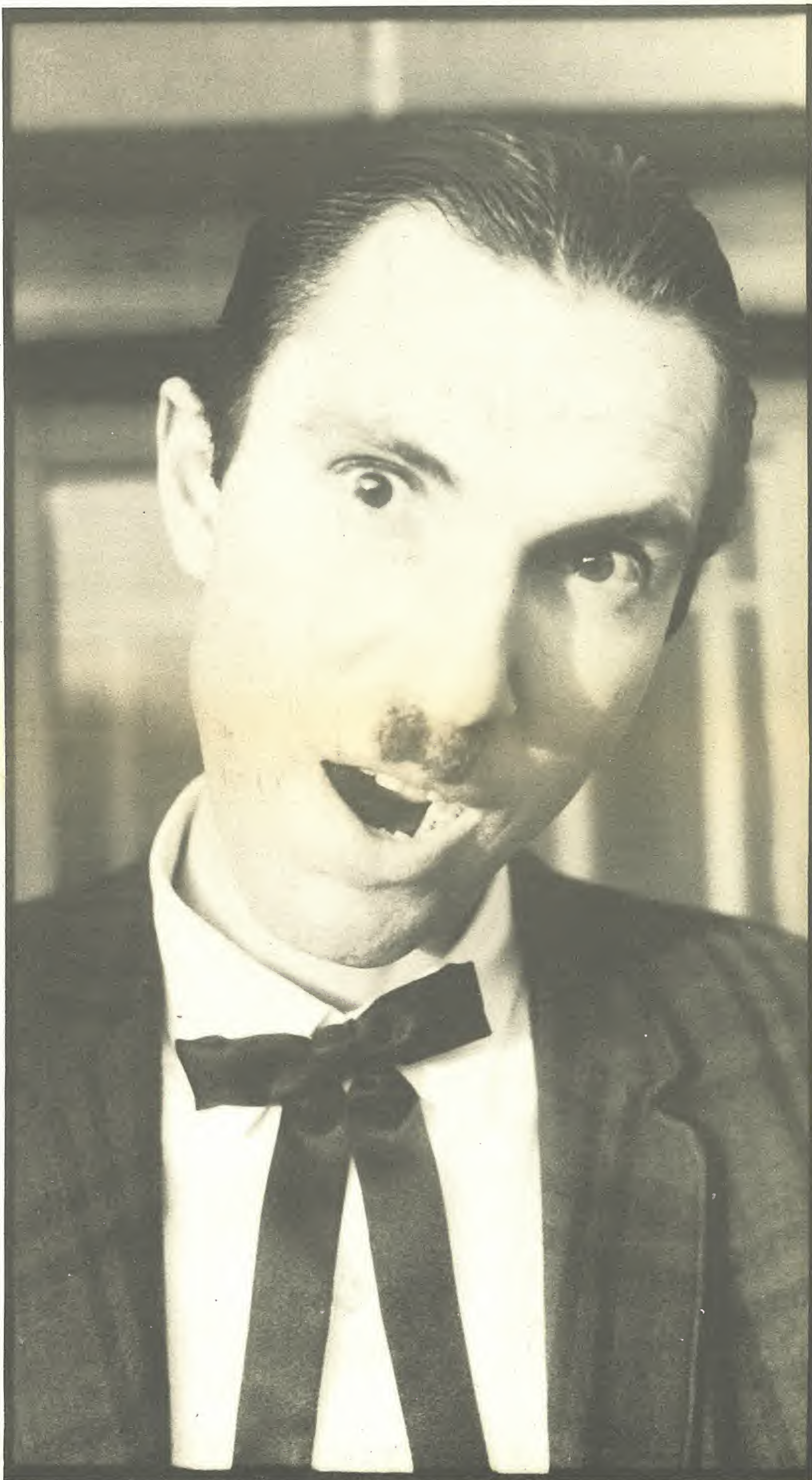
"**Mickey Mouse** is supposed to be a sincere tribute to Walt Disney.

"The song **Angst in My Pants** is not supposed to be a ha-ha funny song. Maybe saying 'angst in my pants' has a certain amount of lightness to it. With the lyric of the song and the subject matter, the melody and how it's treated, I think if Sparks has ever been poignant, this is certainly it."

— Russell

"Ron and I really like the **Whomp That Sucker** album. It was more of a return to working with a band again. We wanted to work with other musicians as a real group. We wanted to play live concerts again. We really like that album as well as the **Angst in My Pants** album. We've actually established ourselves once again with a real group situation. We're working with Sparks-type songs once again."

— Russell



Photos by P.L. Noble



# BREEDING GROUND



Bruce Lam

by Bruce Lam

The world is a breeding ground of discontent for a quartet coping with existence on the outer edges of East York.

They are Breeding Ground. By night they spread their brand of minimalism through the Queen Street circuit. It's not minimalism in the contours set by the Bush Tetras; Breeding Ground's music is bleak, lacking singular joy. For Breeding Ground, their music is therapy, their lyrics about growing up.

## THIN RED LINE

**You're looking for an answer  
Searching vainly hoping, feeling, grasping  
And honesty never entering the picture  
We've all been deceived to some degree**

Steeped with dark overtones, their underlying despair swirls through the crowded quarters of the (since renovated) back room of the Queen City Tavern. John's vocals echo against the tribal backbeat from Ken. Attention naturally rivets on John, who is a flying blur of black and white, while Jonathan on bass and Hugh on guitar remain static.

Breeding Ground's repertoire is original, complemented by three unusual covers of early Bowie, Supremes, and the Kinks' *Dead End Street*.

In a room sparsely filled with beer-sipping youngsters, the group's efforts are in vain. Determined to climb fast and break out or risk burning out, Breeding Ground recently snared the warm-up position for British B-Movie.

On the night of this encounter with Breeding Ground that was a week away. So it was down to the basement of the Queen City amongst the sinks and it was here that initial impressions of Breeding Ground were shattered.

## IN THE BASEMENT

It's cold and dark, but here John and Jonathan act as natural leaders and do most of the talking. Hugh is affable, more down to earth, given to cracking odd jokes while Ken is reluctant to talk or is it that he isn't asked the questions? Lurking in the background are two loyal fans, former workers at Dunkin' Donuts where Breeding Ground turn up for daily sustenance.

SHADES: *Who writes the lyrics in this particular band?*

JOHN: I write the majority of them and one song Jonathan wrote.

SHADES: *Are your songs a reflection of any attitude towards the world? Are you a pessimistic person, cynical, snide?*

JOHN: Uh...

HUGH: (in the background) Yes, yes, yes, yes.

JOHN: No, not really too cynical. Fairly optimistic

person I guess.

SHADES: *(surprised) But do you find that reflected in your songs?*

JOHN: No, not really. Probably, what would you say, careful optimism?

JONATHAN: I don't know, it's like (pauses) ... Being overly optimistic can be bad for you, and silly because you're not facing what's in your own backyard, and we are and that's more optimistic than pretending that it's not there.

SHADES: *But your music is full of very dark overtones, like in Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Psychedelic Furs; it's not very buoyant in spirit.*

JOHN: No, it's atmospheric, a bit more moody. But they are more thinking lyrics than depressing lyrics.

JONATHAN: If you listen to the lyrics, they're not depressing. It's just that sometimes you have to rap people over the head to make them listen. If you actually listen to the words, we have some people who have seen us enough to know what we're trying to say. They're not really that depressing.

## TOUCH OF COLOUR

**I was a touch of colour  
Just before I was wounded  
With no illusions to cushion the blow  
That's a start on life I haven't got**

SHADES: *What are you trying to tell your fans?*

JONATHAN: What are we trying to tell our fans? (lull in conversation)

JOHN: (cautiously) That there's a bigger world out there than a rock and roll party?

JONATHAN: I guess we're trying to reflect our own world, which is not all fun and games?

HUGH: But, it's like Breeding Ground has been only around for so long, since November, and what we're singing, or what John is saying we're all complaining about is in the way we're feeling, like being out of work, or whatever, and our sort of thoughts about that. It's depressing, that's being honest about it. I think we can change our lives ... it's just one facet of our life.

JOHN: Some things come from ideas, maybe circumstances or things I'm interested in. It's not depressing, it's not any one view, it's a description of ...

SHADES: *Is Wintergarden a concession to commercialism? It's your most dance-oriented song compared to the rest of your repertoire. Or is that a fair evaluation?*

JOHN: I don't think it's bending towards any commercialism. I think it's got a beat and you can dance to it. It's not The Look of Love (laughs), it's not wishy-washy. It's brand new, it's kind of fun.

JONATHAN: These guys just got jobs, so ... (everyone laughs)

JOHN: A source of optimism!

SHADES: *What is Wintergarden about?*

JOHN: Oh! *Wintergarden* is kind of about an image in my head. It has, I hate to say this, overtones of war, about getting someplace and not having the whole scene turn out to be like what you thought it was when you were all excited about it when you were on this side.

(Situation) THE SET-UP

SHADES: *How important is love to your lyrics and to your imagery?*

JOHN: (Silence) I don't like writing love songs because I think they're too blatant and they're too easy.

JONATHAN: They're too specific.

JOHN: They're too specific. I think some of them are a touch romantic, in a sense, but more in a mood and an image than atmosphere. I love images, but they may be a bit too personal to pick up in songs.

SHADES: *How would you compare Dirge to Love Will Tear Us Apart?*

JOHN: Hmm. How would I compare them?

JONATHAN: *Love Will Tear Us Apart* has acoustic guitar in it.

JOHN: And I's alive! (laughing. In background John is imitating the sounds of being strangled.)

SHADES: *(continuing question) In terms of its emotion...*

JOHN: In emotion?

SHADES: *In expression...*

JOHN: Possibly. I guess there is a correlation.

SHADES: *It's almost a sublime song.*

JOHN: Yeah, it's a very personal song.

JONATHAN: Tell us what's it about. I heard it's very personal.

JOHN: It is, and it isn't. Songs are funny. Lyrics are strange.

## DIRGE

**He called me up and asked me to come over  
I said I wasn't ready for the other side  
Can you hear it, here it comes**

**Here comes your song**

SHADES: *Why would you write a song like Zoo, which seems to me so very pessimistic. It's almost like an Ultravox song All Stood Still, the world is reduced to machinery and there's very little emotion, passion...*

JOHN: The reason I wrote *Zoo* is because I've just seen a movie I admire very much, *Metropolis*. That's exactly what that movie is all about, machinery and getting all carried away. Plus the *Zoo* element came out of that drumbeat, just the feel of that song, that is definitely the atmosphere, that's what I am talking about.

JONATHAN: It's the first jungle epic.

JOHN: Breeding Ground goes to the jungle.

SHADES: *What is Breeding Ground?*

JOHN: Breeding Ground is an idea that we had. It just came up in a car ride between Ottawa and Toronto.

HUGH: It's the rat s--- in this sink.

JOHN: It sounds fairly serious and it sounds kind of interesting.

HUGH: Slimy.

JOHN: Not too slimy. But it suggests a whole lot of different things.

SHADES: *How has it been playing this particular circuit, Queen City, the Cabana Room, the Beverley...*

JOHN: It's a bad night to ask. It's fine when you're on the upswing and you want people to get to know you. It hit a pinnacle when we had a bit of media attention, some interviews, people knew us, and there was crowds. Now maybe, I think we've overdone it. It's off and on. It's definitely time to retire for a little bit.

JONATHAN: We have to retreat.

JOHN: Regroup and try some other ideas.

SHADES: *Are you trying to follow anyone's footsteps at this point in time?*

JONATHAN: No, not really. There's not too many people who've made it in our type of music.

JOHN: It's not poppy enough to get that single.

HUGH: We don't want to seem like Ian Curtis.

JOHN: A little more lively, though (animated). Don't mention Joy Division, don't mention Joy Division because there's too much Joy Division in all that stuff.

## A HAPPY ENDING

SHADES: *You never do smile on stage.*

JOHN: No, I guess not, but you can't smile through a song like *Underground*. It's a serious song and it has a lot of energy, so if I'm there smiling and bopping it's not going to work.

SHADES: *Could you write a happy song?*

JOHN: I think we have a few happy songs.

JONATHAN: Couldn't you hear them? Don't you remember?

**Can you hear it, here it comes**

**Here comes your song**

(Song fades as Breeding Ground slinks away into hiding. Look out for the Breeding Ground EP to come out in September. And Breeding Ground do smile occasionally.)

## A Guide for the Uninitiated by Arnold Layne

He led me into his apartment and told me to have a seat by the window. I noticed that lying on his coffee table was a colourful, side-stapled magazine called **Jamming**. "What's this?" I asked, more than just half-interested. "Oh, that's a fanzine from Britain. It's good, not as good as this one," came his reply, offering me a glance at **Vague**, a more professional, but still grass-rootsy publication. "A wha? A fanzine? What's that?" "You don't know what a fanzine is? Like **Smash It Up** or one of those things." I still didn't know.

Now I do of course, but it's so typical of new music fans; sure they have an avid interest in the sort of underground movement surrounding new music, but they turn to some megamagazine like **NME** for information, only to be bombarded with ads and 3-page "articles". Worse still, they'll buy the trashy, glossy, over-priced **Face**, or one of its many clones. The most uninformed will expect Peter Goddard and Jonathan Gross to cover new music responsibly.

Music fanzines are an answer to the idiotic, largely (of smaller things) ignorant snobbishness of "journalism"; a response to the capitalistic instincts of the corporate media which go after trends till they become a bad joke (like **CITY's** New Music programme or the Star's belated but infinite guides to "new wave" fun and fashion); and, among other motivations, fanzines are a response to the absence of certain new cultural coverage, especially in the case of local bands.

Fanzines flourish because they cover the music the larger media ignore until the bandwagon time approaches, in a direct and down-to-earth style. Fanzines are a more intimate and hence, for their readers, a more effective method of communication. For the rest of the world, they can be (at their best and their worst) all but inaccessible: in form, content and distribution.

For a city of two million, Toronto has given birth to relatively few fanzines -- until recently that is. In the past year several have come and gone, but several have also remained to develop what is now an exciting, diverse, constantly changing subculture of Toronto music press.

The oldest survivor is **Smash It Up** (or its various nick-names like **Local Smash** and **Smash Media**) which, for a few months anyhow, is now a tape-zine of interviews and/or music by local bands. Its editor, Nick White (now of the famous Rent Boys) started **Smashing** two and a half years ago and is still going strong after 24 issues. Nick covers everything he reasonably can in new music with excellent reportage of the local music scene and provocative interviews with important international acts like **Echo & the Bunnymen**. **Smash It Up** (currently **Oral Smash**) is available at the Record Peddler or from Nick at 141 Collier Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4V 1M2.

**Schrik** is the second oldest of this generation of fanzines, still being published in Toronto. Seeing as Deanna only began publishing a little over a year ago, that doesn't exactly give Toronto's existing fanzine population much of a history. On the other hand, it emphasizes the size of the recent fanzine explosion in Toronto; so much has happened within a year that the future does indeed look bright. **Schrik** is an excellent fanzine, giving perhaps the best overall coverage of local and out-of-town-and-passing-through bands in Toronto. Alas, it is too infrequent (mostly because of sadly lacking finances -- a common fanzine bitch). At 50¢, **Schrik** is a fantastic bargain compared to the mainstream alternatives. **Schrik**, as well as a few out-of-town fanzines that its editor distributes like **Idle Thoughts** and **Jamming** (both excellent) is available at the Record Peddler, like most fanzines, or from 34 Longford Cres., Agincourt, Ontario M1W 1P4.

**Civil Disobedience** has little in common with **Smash It Up** but probably attracts the same audience. Whereas **Smash It Up** tends to concentrate on the actual music that grew from the punk movement, **Civil Disobedience** looks at the ideas; the motivations of the anti-authoritarian subculture. Put together mostly by Rob Mallion and Youth Youth Youth, a local punk band (for lack of a better term), lately **Civil Disobedience** has been published rather irregularly but apparently still exists with a large readership. Write to Rob Mallion, 367 Woodsworth Rd., Willowdale, Ontario M2L 2T8.

At this point the "older" fanzines in Toronto have all been accounted for. Sure, there were others like **Toranna Punks**, **Pig Paper**, and **Rebel Music** (a Rock Against Racism project) but they are all more-or-less defunct, save for **Pig Paper** which is published every-now-and-again-but-hardly-ever in sunny California where its editor migrated some time ago.

Nevertheless, joining the survivors of the Xerox press are a slew of new and diverse fanzines.

# TO.FAN-



Toronto is experiencing a new wave of new music publications, which is only appropriate considering the similar new life given to local bands, which are still experiencing hard times but recovering quite nicely since the implosion caused last year by the closing of the Edge (etc.). Like the bands, the new fanzines tend to be unstable, with editors calling it quits all the time out of frustration; on the other hand, there are an equal number of newcomers to this amateur publishing scene. Surely some of the more enthusiastic and able editors will be around as long as there is a need for them.

The first of these fanzines to crop up seems to be **This Tiny Donkey Looks Rather Lost**, which later became **The Hanged Men Dance**. Its original editor was inspired to do a fanzine after seeing a few of the British fanzines and Toronto equivalents like **Schrik**. Staff changes (Sara Bellum and Jim Shedden replaced Lisa shortly after the magazine's inception) have given this magazine a different look and approach each time. The editors write about a variety of topics, encompassing poetry quite enthusiastically, and presenting the whole thing in a somewhat creative graphic style. Available from Jim Shedden, 35 Ivy Green Cr., Scarborough, Ontario, M1G 2Z3.

Within a week after **This Tiny Donkey** got loose, other latent fanzine editors came out of the closet. **The Firm**, for example, came and went in a flash. It was an inexpensive (35¢) fanzine with a lot of short reviews of out-of-town bands like the Dead Kennedys (with an interview), and Devo and Iggy Pop. A second issue never appeared, but apparently its editor, known as "Weasel", is putting together a second, and final, issue. One of the unfortunate casualties of the fanzine explosion.

**Animal Reflex** is an offbeat fanzine published by the Rent Boys' bassist, Brat X. Combining music, humour and politics, **Animal Reflex** is almost like the editor's personality on paper. Publishing is sporadic and distribution is even worse; sold either at the Record Peddler or from the editor personally (in person — no mailing address), **Animal Reflex** is scarce, to say the least.

**Hide** isn't exactly a fanzine per se but there's probably still something of interest for people reading fanzines. Those involved with this magazine are aiming at an audience somewhere between the fanzine readership and Toronto's avant garde art fringe. Only two issues have appeared, both of them superlative. The first covered such diverse topics as Kenneth Anger, Tiny Tim, and Bush Tetras. The graphics display a professional ability, demonstrating the editors' interest in the art community. **Hide #2** was especially interesting because it included a tape of music from such obscure Toronto bands as Bunny and the Lakers, the West Hillbillies and Rongwrong. Write to Hide, 49 Camden St., Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1V2 for more information.

**Kick It Over**, too, isn't exactly a new music fanzine but borders on being one. Along with its sister publication, **Call To Arms**, a free political leaflet, it is a loosely organized publication put together by anti-authoritarians in Toronto. As new music fans are the most supportive of this type of publication it does tend to cater to them. With the last issue being printed tabloid size on newsprint, things appear to be looking up for them. However, I recommend writing to them c/o P.O. Box 5811, Station "A", Toronto, M5W 1P2 for details.

**Rabid Sparks** began as a pathetic fanzine, but has improved a lot since then. It is similar to **Civil Disobedience** in its content, but the form isn't as tight and topics appear to be more varied. I say "appear" because there hasn't been much to go on yet. I'm not sure if **Rabid Sparks** is still published or if it, too, has joined the casualties. Write to 49 Jersey Ave., Toronto, M6G 3A4.

**Sounds From The Streets** is one of the more frequently-appearing fanzines in Toronto. It's much more direct than most (like **Hide** and **Kick It Over**) and therefore appeals to a wider fanzine audience. SFTS's editor, who calls himself "Dave the Rave", tries to expose others to music they would most likely not be aware of; like local bands Youth Youth Youth and L'Etranger, or British unknowns like the Fall. Special attention is given to Dave's favourite, The Jam. Write to 16 Salisbury Circle, Brampton, Ontario, L6V 2Z6.

**The Last Thing** is a strange "we print anything" fanzine put out by a couple of students in Scarborough (contrary to what one might expect, most fanzines do not at this point have their origins in the city). Published whenever Grant, its editor, has enough money and material to print, it is now only available from him or at the Record Peddler. Material ranges from interviews with local bands, movie reviews and some rather offbeat experimental pieces that sometimes work and sometimes fail. 155 Lynbrook Dr., Scarborough, Ontario, M1H 2N4.

**Rip The System** is, in some ways, a lot like **Rabid Sparks** and **Smash It Up** in its anti-

## ZINES



## RENT BOYS INC

by L.A. Elliott

In spite of the name, Rent Boys Inc is not an escort agency catering to well-to-do patrons of pop music, although certain members of the band claim to be available for a price. Many "hip" Torontonians (see the *Globe & Mail*, Fanfare for a definition of hip) have become aware of this original band through their weekly venue at the luxuriously appointed Queen City Tavern, on Queen Street near Bathurst. Those persistent enough to shoulder through the strippers, heretofore the sole regular attraction of the Queen City, have been rewarded with an evening of startlingly original music, cheap beer and an exciting opportunity to sample various "novelties" in the facilities.

The Rent Boys Inc include Simon Nine, lead singer, Brat X on bass, Howieird (Butch) Zephyr on saxophone, Mikal on drums and Nick Smash on percussion. Simon and Brat X were the original Rent Boys who expanded the band by self-confessed stealing of members from other bands, including the System. However, as Nick Smash justifiably points out, antecedents and influences are unimportant, particularly in this instance. The Rent Boys Inc have a wide appeal evidenced by their fast-growing audience which includes mohawk hairdos and argyle socks with the odd New Romantic from Don Mills thrown in for effect. Their performance is intimately related to their audience. Each performance is unique, varying with the mood of the performers and the audience reaction. Little is rehearsed and there is no fixed schedule. Occasionally, energy is expressed in violence as Simon and Brat X tumble about on stage. Props are non-existent, on-stage attire is usually subdued (with the exception of the odd skirt, and on occasion something even more memorable. There is an unsubstantiated rumour that on one instance they played with very little clothing on at all). Visually, a Rent Boys performance is far from boring. There is constant movement on stage and around it; the enthusiasm of players and audience is obvious. Simon is dynamic as lead singer, demanding audience reaction with monologues, comments and questions. Drumsticks go flying into the crowd of dancers while Brat X gives a narcissistic performance on bass.

The music is predominantly rhythm, the melody introduced by Simon's voice and Howieird's saxophone interweaving with the beat. There is no lead guitar. The overall effect is loud, energetic and sometimes inspired. Although undisciplined, the

establishment approach, but the beauty of fanzines is that their amateurishness prevents any duplication. Not working from a commercial point-of-view, reviews, interviews and total presentation are bound to be completely different. **Rip The System** just started so it is kind of limited in its appeal; once the editor gets more feedback, though, we can expect it to develop its reach. Very Punk. Write: Lisa Smith, 435 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5V 2A5.

**Before And After Science And In The Jungle With A Funky Beat** is more-or-less a one-shot fanzine put out by ex-**Last Thing** co-editor Philip Exada. There may be another issue (fanzines are so unpredictable) but I don't think so at this

sound has style and impact. Because of continuous improvisation, the music has been developing quickly, adapting as the Rent Boys gain a wider audience. This music is not something which a record company executive might call commercially viable: too unpredictable and temperamental. However, the vitality and energy of this band cannot be ignored. Without employing electronic gadgetry, the music is eminently danceable, sustained by the driving percussion. In a recent interview, Nick stated that he did not believe in formal written grammar or standardized spelling and this disregard for convention is evident in the spontaneous nature of Rent Boys Inc performances. A sort of stream of consciousness recital. And spontaneity is a rare commodity in the current superfluity of set formula pop stars.

The Rent Boys do not describe themselves as a political band; they have no standard platform and have not allied themselves with any particular cause. On the other hand, they are not playing because it's something amusing to do after work. The lyrics, when decipherable within the confines of tiny clubs and atrocious acoustics, are considered and emotionally expressive. Their intent is to provoke their audiences into some sort of reaction, preferably a strong one. Simon, rather flipantly, equated performing with a religious experience.

Members of the Rent Boys Inc, with the exception of Howieird, are in their late teens and early twenties and therefore, understandably, enjoy playing for younger people. The reactions are less self-conscious, more basic. The drawback to playing licensed clubs is that they exclude minors. The Rent Boys have not confined themselves to the club circuit. They play benefits and private parties and have considered playing high schools. There are tentative plans to perform at universities and colleges. For such a young band, the Rent Boys are surprisingly sophisticated in their approach to their careers. They take themselves seriously, and intend to be around for a long time.

Unlike many local bands, the Rent Boys are not racing down to New York City or saving their pennies for an economy-class flight to London, England. Simon described London audiences as boring and unresponsive. With good reason, they feel that Toronto has the same opportunity and potential as any world capital. And the talent currently in Canada is stupendous. The Rent Boys are inordinately supportive of other Toronto

point. Still very representative of its editor, this fanzine is not at all like the work Philip did for **The Last Thing**. At first glance it looks like an imitation of **Hide** with its blasé graphics but that isn't quite right either (although, the influence is there). There's a review of the Kitchen Synch performance which I haven't seen done in any other fanzine yet. Most of it, though, is made up of creative pieces. Still available in some stores or write to Philip at 131 Bloor St. West, #1212, Toronto, M5S 1S3.

Finally, **Youth Plague** isn't exactly a new fanzine, with seven issues behind it, but it is a new Toronto fanzine since Tim, the Victoria editor, befriended Jill and set up a Toronto office, creating an interesting perspective. Almost totally hard-

bands and this is reciprocated. Nick Smash can be seen on stage with Kinetic Ideals and other members of the band are often seen at concerts in the city. This camaraderie is what makes Toronto a unique environment for musicians and artists, and it is refreshing to see a change from the back-biting associated with the business. It seems a waste of time to compete with other performers to the detriment of developing individual talents.

As a group, the Rent Boys are very bright young men. What is surprising is the way they interact both on stage and off. Although this is a combination of divergent personalities, the Rent Boys are unified in their goal of success, both commercially and artistically. On stage they mesh with an intensity which creates sparks of violence which usually adds excitement to the show, but must on occasion dissolve it completely. The difficulty is in imposing enough structure to focus their talents without losing the energy and enthusiasm which is their trademark.

At the present time, all members of the band have alternative financial resources to the revenue they receive by performing. And other interests. Nick Smash is known for his brainchild, a "fanzine" called **Smash It Up**. The summer issue of Smash consists of a cassette tape with recordings of local bands, an idea which has been exploited in New York but not yet in Canada. A recording of early Rent Boys material, with Simon and Brat X, is available on this issue. Simon has worked on previous solo recordings and Howieird handles the business end of Rent Boys Inc. Mikal draws. Of Brat X, I have little knowledge, as he remained unconscious throughout the interview.

This past summer, the Rent Boys released their first single, which is played from time to time on CFNY Radio. This recording was, by necessity, self-financed as major record companies in Canada are still restricting themselves to more mainstream artists. Those who missed seeing the Rent Boys perform at the Queen City or elsewhere this summer should be able to catch them this fall. Although Rent Boys Inc are not yet legally a corporation they plan to complete the formalities and diverge into other areas. This band has the potential to become truly good, and members have the determination and ambition to succeed. "Great potential" has been, up to now, the phrase most often used to describe these musicians and I hope they fulfill this prophecy. In the meantime, they put on a marvelous performance.

core, it is still interesting to the fringe passerby like myself. Ontario office is at 1235 Lambeth Rd., Oakville, Ontario, L6H 2E2. Recommended.

As already mentioned, the Record Peddler is your best bet when looking for fanzines. It is located at 115 Queen St. East, here in Toronto. Other places that carry the odd fanzine are: Records on Wheels at Yonge and Eglinton; Vortex Records at 139 Dundas East; This Ain't the Rosedale Library at 110 Queen St. East; Pages Book Store at 256 Queen St. West.

Prices will range from 35¢ to \$2.00 (for the **Smash** tape) but I'd write before I sent any money to editors to make sure they still have copies to sell. Happy hunting — and reading.



# LOS MICROWAVES, BABY BUDDHA AND MORE

f. Stop Fitzgerald



by Mark Leach

"When anybody criticizes, even by implication, the imperial city, I take umbrage and the two of us go to a delicatessen. New York may be one crystallized super-ego; it is certainly a pile of guilt. Guilt, however, has its sweet uses. It is a source of energy and a gauge of consciousness. Living in the suburbs has always seemed to me like dramatizing Oedipus Rex in front of an audience of Peter Pans. However agreeable the Peter Pans, they miss the point. The suburbs are a Veil of Maya. New York is a Bindu Dot." — John Leonard, *Private Lives In the Imperial City*.

Los Microwaves are a group of four musicians/artists now working in New York after relocating from San Francisco about a year and a half ago. They first came to the attention of your intrepid interviewer with their second single, *Coast to Coast*/Radio Heart (Soundchaser Records), which they released in 1979. The year before they had issued the first single *Forever/I Don't Want To Hold You*, an embryonic effort that sold a few thousand copies, first on Hyperspace Records and later on Time Release Records. *Coast to Coast*, originally intended as a teaser for an ep project that never materialized, did considerably better due both to the maturation of their cynical synthesized not-quite-pop-sound and to better distribution.

Both of these records featured David Javelosa (synthesizers, vocals,) and Meg Brazill (bass, vocals, some synthesizers). Drummer Todd Rose played on the second single, I'm not sure about the first. The same line-up recorded an lp for Posh Boy Records last year called *Life After Breakfast* and a single, the amazing *Time To Get Up*, was taken from that album. Los Microwaves recently completed their membership by adding Pilar as a dancer and occasional keyboard player.

**Scene: Interior, New York. Late Afternoon**

A hotel room on Fifth Avenue in uptown Manhattan. Pilar, Meg and The Interviewer have been chatting for half an hour about mutual friendships, the intricacies of life in New York and other matters while they wait for the rest of the band. Meg Brazill is intelligent and wry. She is not from Brazil but from somewhere far less exotic that will be disclosed in our last reel, but she has been to exotic places and thinks exotic thoughts. Pilar is outgoing, witty and warm and was born in San Francisco. She does a fire dance in the Los Microwaves show, which automatically makes her exotic. When David finally arrives he is pre-announced by the jingle of the keys on his belt as he comes down the hall. The Interviewer immediately associates him with the character Keys, from the movie and book *E.T.*, about whom it is said in the book "He certainly had a great many doors to open in life, whoever he was." The comparison seems appropriate for David, since he is also an integral part of Baby Buddha (who have an album called *Music For Teenage Sex* out on Posh Boy) and is involved in various collaborations and solo projects. Meg, Pilar and David could probably all be described as pragmatic dreamers, people who are good at coming up with original ideas and finding the means to make them work.

**Reel One — The Name**

Interviewer: "I've always thought Los Microwaves was the perfect name for a band from San Francisco, because I've never seen as many microwave towers in any city as there are in SF. I also know that there was a political battle there concerning those towers and the potential harm they represent. Did that have anything to do with your choosing the name?"

David Javelosa: The name stems from a sort of

statement on modern technology. But it didn't have much to do with SF particularly, it had more to do with San Jose. San Jose is a very big electronic engineering centre, it's called Silicon Valley because that's where all the chips are designed for engineering, missile guidance, IBM computers.

— So San Jose was the birthplace of Los Microwaves?

David: That was the cradle of the concept. And San Jose is heavily Hispanic and where I grew up I was affected by a lot of Latin music.

— What is the statement on technology that you mentioned?

David: Well, microwaves; it's like calling yourself nuclear in a way. It doesn't have as much publicity as, say, atomic energy or nuclear warfare, but it is as potentially dangerous because microwave radiation is as dangerous as nuclear radiation. But it's more direct, you use it in laser beams, communication beams. It's used for communication, for satellites, but it can also be turned up to where it can be used as a weapon. It's a positive and a negative sort of thing, everyone now thinks of ovens and the controversy over whether those are dangerous or not, but that's just the most commonly seen application of microwaves. I think the widest use right now is probably in communication networks such as SPRINT lines, which are really common. Everybody's using satellites now, they think that satellites are these things far off in space but we're using them now in our everyday life, just to communicate, to call home to Mom. And you're using microwave relays to beam up to those satellites. I can see microwave applied to what you think of as a laser beam, but which will actually be a maser beam. (Meg laughs) No, seriously, that's the name of it, masers are super high frequency sound energy beams that have even more disruptive effect than lasers.

— I can't remember ever getting much of this information in your lyrics.

David: We used to be more conscious about it. I think that the electronicness (sic) is more in the application of the instruments now. And the fact that we're a mass media concept.

**Reel Two — Time To Get Up**

— Tell me about the song *Time To Get Up*

Meg Brazill: That was written in rehearsal, one of the first times I fooled around with the synthesizer. And it was just my morning chant. For me it was the basic thing of working fulltime at something and then not wanting to be there anymore and how it gets harder and harder to go there and just realizing that I should find the ways and means to, if that wasn't what I wanted to be doing, to do something else. It was a really funny song for me because that's actually my boss's name at the time (Barbara. It should be explained that in *Time To Get Up*, Meg sings about not being able to get up in the morning to go to work after a late night. A mechanical telephone voice continually announces the time, beginning at six am and getting progressively later while Meg telephones her boss to book off sick. Her boss says she's fired. In the meantime a sort of martial robotic beat builds to a crescendo. Best line: "You shouldn't have let me go to sleep, if you wanted me to get up.") It was getting to the point of being ludicrous because I'd be working full time and then we'd go to rehearsal and then go home and work on band business for another couple of hours. And then end up being late for work in the morning, later and later and later to the point where I stopped making excuses because there were no excuses to make. Which has always been a problem, it's still a problem. I go to work about two hours late now. And of course all my

subsequent jobs know about this song, so it makes it a bit harder each time.

**Reel Three — Pilar and the Fire Dance**

— How did you get in the band, Pilar?

Pilar: Well, I could say Meg found me crying on her doorstep one day and I asked if I could play too and she said yes, but that's probably not exactly accurate. Actually I seem to remember meeting David at a place called the Temple Beautiful in San Francisco, I forget who was playing, but David had been accompanist on piano for a dance teacher I was working with at the time. We started yacking and eventually I got him to do the music for some pieces I'd choreographed. And it went on from there. I played with Baby Buddha after that. Then we all moved to New York about the same time for different reasons. I didn't even know they were coming here until they arrived. I did some more work with David, then I started to work with Meg because she's cuter (laughs). We started to work on a flexi-disc project. And then one day in Meg's office she said they'd been talking about it and would I like to join the band? Actually it was more like, work with the band and see how it goes.

— Tell me about the fire dance.

Pilar: Well, it's an old family tradition (with a smile). I come from a long line of self-immolationists. My grandfather used to set himself on fire in a fire act that he did as a diver, he was an Olympic diver. Up until he was 80 he would do this thing every year to raise money for the Olympic team. It was in Oakland, California and the highlight of this show that had all these routines like Ethel — what was her name? She had all these swimming water follies?

David: Ethel Mermaid? Ethel Mermaid? (No doubt they mean Esther Williams).

Pilar: The climax would be my grandfather in all these wet pajamas, climbing to the top of this 30 foot diving platform and pouring gasoline on his back, setting fire to himself, doing a handstand on a chair and then a swan dive into the pool below. There'd be all these girls in bikinis going "ooh! aah! There goes a flaming old man!" (laughter). My mother made him stop when he was 80 and she was very distraught that her daughter had taken it up. I've always like fire, I was a campfire girl.

David: We'll be doing the high dive for our next tour (he smiles).

— So this is the climax of the Los Microwaves show?

Pilar: For now.

David: Your fire dance is probably the most sensational thing you do, but her movement is what attracted my interest as far as her working with the band. I had been doing music almost exclusively for dance before the band, before I thought about making records.

— That's interesting, because most of the people I've talked to who've been working with synthesizers were into soundtracks first.

David: It's kind of the same thing. When you're working with choreographers and theatre and directors you're basically doing a soundtrack but you have an opportunity to do it live. I had worked on several plays where the musicians would be in the orchestra pit as accompanists for the play or the dance piece.

**Reel Four — a short talk with Todd**

(Todd Rosa had some in a few minutes earlier)

— How did you get into the band?

Meg: Through the SPCA actually.

Todd Rosa: I bought my way in or they bought me in.

Meg: We went to the SPCA and saw this really cute little drummer and they said you have to get him

spayed and get him his shots (laughter). Unfortunately we never did get him spayed...

Todd: Whatever they say is fine with me, I'm not feeling too well today.

Meg: You look fine, you look better than I feel.

Pilar: I think it's a hoax.

Todd: I feel like I have an alien growing in me (gasps of mock horror from all of us).

**Reel Five — about Synthesizer Bands**

— Is the addition of Pilar and the other things you do live a way of making up for the fact that most people don't think that synthesizer bands are very exciting to watch?

Meg: I don't know if it's to make up for it, it's really just the way that we are...

Pilar: Yeah, because Meg came from a theatre background, I'm from a theatre background.

Meg: Besides, no one thinks of us as a synthesizer band, that's the funny thing. So far we haven't really been lumped into that category.

David: Sometimes we are. Promoters will put us together with synthesizer bands, a lot of people just put us with more fun rock bands. Most synthesizer bands are too hardware conscious, a lot of them are into that hard rock value of keyboard stacks, equipment stacks. I have personally worked towards eliminating as much as possible. I don't use amps on stage. When you're hardware conscious you're constantly fiddling with it and you're constantly stationary. What I wanted to do especially with the new portable keyboards is to free up the stage movement, having less equipment so you can see the people.

— Do you ever use film or video?

David: We've never done that, we've thought about it but it seems like what we ended up doing, instead of using film or slides to make a synthesizer act more visually exciting, we just made ourselves more visually exciting. Meg is an actress and standing up there playing bass she does more portrayals of the song and makes funny little movements.

**Reel Six — The Assassin Fly Girl**

— What is this theatre background that's been alluded to?

Meg: That everyone surreptitiously refers to (deep breath). Oh, gosh. Well, I got my big start tap dancing in Acapulco, in the square there. I was out of money and there was a woman next door who played violin and was willing to play it like a fiddle, and we went down there in scanty clothing (laughs briefly) and the Mexicans loved it and the tourists hated it. Then from there I started tap dancing in bars in Oakland (to Pilar, who's giggling) something you didn't know I'll bet! I was doing what was basically experimental theatre, working with a couple of people, writing and producing our own material. I had been in a couple more established groups doing conventional type plays. From there I've really been going into working on my own material.

— You're still doing this?

Meg: I'm now just starting to do it again. Now what I'm doing probably comes more under the performance art category. Ideally it would be considered theatre, except I don't really want to do it in traditional places, in a lot of ways clubs and bars are ideal because you have people standing around, drinking and having an active vocal response to what you're doing and if they don't like it they walk away. Whereas in more traditional theatre it's very austere and people sit there and there's not much response until the end. People aren't sure even about laughing, it becomes too holy. They think it's art, when it's really supposed to be...like, the piece I'm doing now is called the Assassin Fly Girl and the ultimate of that piece is that, years from now, the Assassin Fly Girl will begin inviting major political figures to the show and when eventually one of them comes to see it, she'll assassinate them (laughter).

Pilar: Shhhh, shhhh! Don't tell us that now!

Meg: And that'll be the end of that piece!

**Reel Seven — Baby Buddha**

— Did Baby Buddha come before Los Microwaves or after?

David: The partner I did Baby Buddha with initially was Charles Hornaday. We had been playing together for a long time off and on, in various little improv projects and meagre attempts at lucrative projects. I think probably the strangest thing was doing a lounge duet at a Rusty Scupper in Alameda (Meg and Pilar laugh). For the yacht club set. And we used to jam at his apartment in North Beach (SF) with synthesizers and tapes and electronic gadgets. At one point he got a job playing at a Holiday Inn in Hollywood with a couple of disco people, so he took off. And I told him I was going to start goofing around with a rhythm section-type band, if he wanted to come back when he was done with this other gig, he could play with us. And that band turned into Los Microwaves. So he came back, but Los Microwaves had pretty much defined an identity and it wasn't quite the sort of thing he was into playing. So we started jamming electronically, which really wasn't what Los Microwaves was doing, and so we decided that would be Baby Buddha. It was basically a bunch of loose living-room improvs with a lot of synthesizers. Baby Buddha made its first club appearance with



the Contractions and Los Microwaves at the Roosevelt Cafe in SF, at that point it was still pretty much me and Chuck. Then we started not caring and realizing it wasn't a band, it was more of a concept. So we just added whoever we felt like appearing with.

Pilar: Whoever showed up in the dressing room before the show.

David: About a year after the first really long East Coast tour with Los Microwaves, I had some recording ideas that I wanted to try under the Baby Buddha concept, which is when I started working with Kathy (Peck, Contractions). And that's where *Stand by Your Man* came from. It was more of a funny-disco-country-and-western concept that just came under the Baby Buddha category. And that led on to the lp.

— I get the impression from you that you come up with an idea and then figure out which would be the best way to do it: with Los Microwaves, Baby Buddha, solo or whatever. Is that true?

David: I like to see ideas completed. I like to get things done. So I try to go about things the most efficient way.

Meg: Really? (laughter)

**Reel Eight — Christiane F.**

— How did the Christiane F. project come about?

David: As a result of the Baby Buddha album, my solo ep and the Los Microwaves lp, we've developed a loose relationship with Posh Boy records in L.A., Robbie Fields had met her on the promotion tour for the movie and got her interested in doing a recording project. Because of time and availability he called me in New York, because she was coming through here, and asked me to get her in the studio and do the project here. We did it in the few days she was here on her way back to Hamburg. It was kind of a rush job but I felt really good about it and felt we could pull it off. I feel the product itself is really substantial, she has some qualms about it because she wasn't involved in the final mix of the artwork.

Meg: I think it's important to realize, for someone to realize, that there weren't existing songs when they went in the studio. It was like her deciding to do this thing and then coming in and trying to come up with something. They were definitely her lyrics though.

David: The session was mainly Christiane and myself and Bob Hoffnar, who's with a group called Indoor Life (another ex-San Francisco band now in New York).

**Reel Nine — New York**

**Scene: Exterior, New York. Late Afternoon**

(The Interviewer is about to ask about New York, and his attention wanders briefly. A crack SHADES cinema crew (rendered invisible to avoid attracting notice) follows him along Fifth Avenue.

(First, he buys a paper. It's a paper owned by the Murdoch chain and looks like a cross between the Toronto Sun and the National Enquirer. It is fish wrap. On the front page is a lurid headline trumpeting the murder by stabbing of a cover girl model in her fashionable apartment. This is bad enough, but by uncomfortable coincidence, the model was a recently arrived Canadian. The Interviewer wonders; is someone trying to tell him something?

(As he walks along he watches the pedestrians. They pay no attention to traffic signals whatsoever. Watching them dash about he unconsciously quickens his pace to match theirs. He wonders if they are all hurrying to beat some curfew that he hasn't heard about. Back in Toronto he will continue to ignore traffic signals for a couple of days before remembering he doesn't have to hurry anymore.

(At the north-east corner of Fifth and Forty-second street a man is selling I Hate New York buttons. All of his customers seem to have New York accents. The Interviewer would like to buy one but feels he hasn't earned the privilege.

(The Interviewer walks by the Empire State Building without recognizing it. He goes to three famous art museums and then is informed by a friend that the place you must go in New York is the Frick Collection. He had not gone to the Frick Collection and won't have the time before leaving to see it. Another friend asks him to try and sum up New York. The best he can do is this: In New York, anything is probable. He wonders if Los Microwaves can do any better.)

**Scene: Interior. New York. Early Evening.**

— Pilar, you said before that you came to New York for a different reason than the others. What was your reason?

David (laughs) To get the hell out of San Francisco! Pilar: No, basically... (pauses to gather her thoughts) I don't know whether it was a product of internal neuroses or an actual physical way of being, but I always felt that San Francisco didn't give women a fair shake. Especially women that they couldn't peg as being this or that. Whatever I did, choreography and working with different people, was always so undefinable it didn't seem to fit into one category or other, because I wasn't really sure what it was either, that I felt nobody every paid any attention to it. For example, an acquaintance of mine just came out from San Francisco, he ran a magazine called Vacation magazine and he knew

people I've worked with and lived two blocks from me, I'd sent him all kinds of stuff and told him about things I was doing. He came out here and saw me perform and came to me after and said, "Oh, I never knew you performed, I had no idea you could do all this stuff!" It was like that the whole time in SF. I always felt I was screaming in a void in San Francisco. And plus I grew up there so it's kind of claustrophobic for me. So I thought I'd come to New York and see if I could scream in a subway train.

— To see if anyone would pay attention.

Pilar: Right. And it seems to work. They paid attention.

— Why did Los Microwaves and Baby Buddha come to New York?

David: Well, Baby Buddha isn't really anywhere.

Meg: It doesn't exist. It's not really anywhere.

Pilar: It's in David's brain.

David: It exists everywhere. If you look at Baby Buddha as being me and Charles and Kathy then it's in San Francisco and New York.

— OK, drop the Baby Buddha part of that question and answer the Los Microwaves part.

David: We felt there was a more active recording scene here. It was a toss up between here and L.A. and I knew New York better, just because I'd been to school out here.

Meg: The biggest thing about New York for me is that there are more people resources. There's such a huge amount of art forms going on that there's constantly an available supply of people to work with and bounce ideas off of, organizations and services and it's closer to Europe. We all felt more comfortable with people in New York than with L.A. I just didn't feel that Los Angeles was a city I wanted to move to and I was really ready for a move, I felt a lot of the same things that Pilar was saying about San Francisco. Not necessarily in terms of the band itself, but... I've always easily been as active as David in other projects, it's just not as visible because they are performances and so they're very temporal. If it's a recording it gains much more visibility and it's a thing that people can carry around. But if it's a performance and you only do it so many times, people may not ever know about it, especially if you go on to do something else and call it something different. And I really found that type of opportunity in SF was a lot more limited than it is here. As much as San Francisco is, in a lot of ways, a much nicer place to live. You can breathe the air there but there's more stuff to do here. We've been here about sixteen months and when we recently went back to San Francisco for a while it really reaffirmed that it was a good move for the band.

David: Well, I figure I'll give New York a couple more years.

Todd: (laughing) You don't even live here now!

David: (defensively) Well, I'm basically living in Philadelphia for the summer but I intend to get a permanent place here.

**Reel Ten: Immediate Futures**

— What are your plans for the future?

David: (quickly) Separate vacations (laughter).

Meg: Summer is typically bad, especially since we've been in New York, we were here last summer and it's so hot, it's not a good time to be highly productive at least in terms of performing. We did just record two new songs and hopefully we'll be recording an album this summer. We'll be doing some live shows, although it'll be limited and hopefully we'll take some specific time off just so that we can try and get out of the heat. A lot of the music business people are on extended vacations in the summer or are only working part of a week so it's not too productive to try and do anything.

Pilar: Nobody in their right mind stays in Manhattan in August!

Meg: Right now things are at kind of an interesting turning point — I'm kind of not sure how much I want to talk about this but — it looks like we may begin working with a high profile manager which will change things significantly in terms of what we do. But the management thing hasn't been decided yet.

Anything else you want to say?

Meg: Let's go to Toronto! We've only ever been to Vancouver and Buffalo, which is almost Toronto.

— Well, yes, but fortunately we can disassociate ourselves from it. (Pilar and David laugh)

David: Meg's from Buffalo!

— Oh, I'm so sorry!

Meg: A lot of people do express their sympathy at that. It's better than staying there, being from there."

They all say goodbye and the band go off to a meeting, dragging a still sickly Todd. The Interviewer phones a friend who is in from California for a few days. A dinner in the East Village is agreed upon, followed by a hunt for bars. They prove to be an easy prey. At one, the ancient and venerable McSoreley's Old Ale House, a tragic accident occurs involving a waiter, a tray full of McSoreley's most toxic brew and our ten reels of film. The beer and the film are wiped out, the waiter survives. The Interviewer and his friend are momentarily silent in honor of a film that died well but will never be seen. Then they order another round.

# DURAN ALSO-RAN



courtesy, Capitol Records

by Angie Baldassarre

A very rare Toronto hot evening. Too hot as I peek my nose into the Concert Hall and feel like I'm entering a sauna. I walk back out onto the street where another day is creeping to a close. But, inside, the hall is already cooking, the dance floor bristling with the bodyheat of Toronto's young night-owls. Tonight they've turned out in force for a rare concert event — a live Duran Duran show.

The crowd are a predictably mixed bunch: the curious and the converted, although some of the latter have got it all wrong; posing the night away in the shadows with Face-clones and trimmings.

The others who know are acting fast, dancing.

And yet, again, the crowd seems to fall into two camps: there's the older ones who either a) ignored punk or b) were in some way affected by it, and the younger teenage ones who have a completely different attitude.

Observing, I'd say the majority of the fans were probably aged about 16 and then evenly distributed on either side.

Duran Duran can afford a platform of some strength. With the magnificent *Rio* on the singles and album charts, Duran have confirmed their growing musical maturity and once again perplexed their band of puritanical critics.

Back in the heat of the Concert Hall oven, the five Duran boys are now onstage. Though they are more ragged live than on record, the crisp, rigorous rhythms of the synth box are reliable anchors and they never fall apart musically.

Or better, I don't wait for them to. The heat was unbearable. I've heard and seen enough. I leave before I become a pool of steaming protoplasm.

Adopting their name from the sci-fi spoof film *Barbarella*, Duran Duran started out in the spring of 1978 with Nick Rhodes and John Taylor playing in a basement in Birmingham with a bass, clarinet and rhythm box. They soon recruited Andy Taylor through a Melody Maker ad, a Geordie with over 600 concerts to his credit. Simon Le Bon — a childhood actor and art school student — came on a waitress's recommendation. Finally Roger Taylor was recruited after being spotted in the Brum punk band The Sex Organs.

The band displayed a slick eye for style and a keen ear for a tune, the qualities that struck the attention of Paul and Michael Berrow, owners of the Rum Runners, Birmingham's hippest club and Duran Duran's passcard to popularity. Growing out of Britain's New Romanticism, Duran's energy, elegance and hard work won them a fanatical following, particularly around London's (now) discredited Blitz scene.

Explains Nick in his Windsor Arms hotel suite: "There were always two sides to the original Blitz scene. There was the high posey end which tended to get in all the colour supplements. Then there were the other half, who were a very basic bunch of real boozers. A lot of people missed the essential humour of what was going on in that people would spend hours getting ready to go out, putting on all these classical clothes, and then go out and get them absolutely wrecked."

Duran's big break occurred when they supported Hazel O'Connor on a full British tour. It was then that EMI signed them and released the electro-funk disco single *Planet Earth* that encapsulated the dance-floor excitement of 1981. Reigning in the top 10, *Planet Earth* introduced Duran Duran to the North American audiences and culminated in an extensive world tour.

The follow-up *Careless Memories* and *Girls on Film* consolidated their popularity and introduced their debut album *Duran Duran* to the charts.

*Rio*, their second and most recent album, enabled the band to take a further step in their sound. The album suggests a harder, more dance-worthy beat building behind the characteristically romantic melodies and dream-like lyrics of Simon Le Bon. A bit disappointing, the album version of

*New Religion*, is considerably less romantic than the original, classical form.

"What happened," smiles Nick, "is that we had an initial idea of that song where we wanted to record in New York with the New York string section, a la Quincy Jones. We ended up recording it in England and it ended up sounding like an English country-style chamber piece. It just wasn't what we envisioned and we weren't happy about releasing it as a single. When it came to the album we decided to record without strings."

Produced by Colin Thurston (of David Bowie fame) and named after the band's collective dream woman, *Rio* contains some of the loveliest songs to come out of the British new music scene lately: *Hungry Like a Wolf*, *Lonely in Your Nightmare*, *Save a Prayer* and *Rio* itself, to name some.

Having recently concluded a successful tour in Japan, Nick is eager to recount his experiences in the East.

"We sort of went down in the Beatlemania fashion when we played there (Japan). Someone took my shoes on stage while I was still wearing them.

"Actually there is a bigger language barrier there than we've anticipated. There was one girl who came up to us and said 'I love your records'. I answered 'Great. Are you coming to the concert tonight?' She just went 'uh?' She had memorized that line and didn't understand a word I said.

"They're very polite and we went down a storm. And it seems that the fans always follow you in swarms. In the hotel they're in groups, in the dressing-room they're in groups; they follow you in a restaurant in groups.

"They're really fanatical there because they don't get many bands. They get a few very big bands, pop bands; and they behave as such in a big manner.

"The image is important but that has a lot to do with the magazines and what they portray. The fans in Japan pay as much attention to the image, but they'll listen to the music and if they like it they'll buy it."

Sitting beside me sipping orange juice, I notice the obvious lines of fatigue on the young and beautiful face of the 22-year-old. He leans back and sighs. "Too much work and exhaustion you're right. I don't mind working because I know it's the only way for a band to survive. We're still far from being rich. But yes, I would like to just stop it all for awhile and relax. I haven't had a chance to catch one game of the World Cup Soccer games yet."

I tell him not to bother, that England was out and that my favourite team, Italy, will most likely walk away with the Cup. At this point the rest of the band, who for the past hour have been quietly taking care of their business, suddenly jumped into fanatical and heated arguments about my favourite sport. Sensing danger, I rush out of the room, only to be pursued by Nick apologizing for his mates.

"See what I mean?" he hurriedly explains as he directs me to an empty room. "Any excuse to get away from the music business is readily welcome even though ... (and he moves to the farther edge of the couch) ... you are wrong about Italy winning!"

I won't get into the remaining part of the interview (it will not make for very pleasant reading) and I'm sure you all know by now who won the bet, but I would like to add that Nick is refreshingly frank about the snobbery and elitism inherent in the electro-beat scene. It's the sort of attitude sure to get up the noses of a rock purists, though God knows why — there's been enough bitchy musical snobbery in the rock papers these past few years. And however much the purists might wince at the idea, there is plenty of soul in Duran Duran. You can feel it in their music, in their clothes, in their attitude, in their clubs and in their lifestyle. They lead by example where punk preached — a positive antidote to depressing times. A clothes and dance pose with a finger on the pulse of the moment.



# BILL NELSON'S THINKING HEART



by P.L. Noble

"One of the problems we're facing at this seminar is that we're trying to define what a producer's role is. Everybody's trying to say what a producer's supposed to do and how we as producers help new music in America, if there will ever be such a thing, which I doubt. The role of the producer is very similar to the role of the musician in that there are several kinds of musicians; therefore, there are different types of producers... I disagree slightly with Martin (Rushent) and the idea that the only good producer is a successful producer because that really puts it in a record sales bracket..."

Bill Nelson

"...Actually, I didn't say that. People only become fashionable when they are successful. I didn't say the only good record producer is the one who is successful. I was unsuccessful for years and I've always been great."

Martin Rushent

July 19 and 20, 1982: welcome to the New Music Seminars at the Sheraton Centre in downtown Manhattan. The above quotes were lifted from the producer's mini-panel, just one of the many discussions that went on. And on.

On the whole, the 2-day event was a big disappointment. Almost everyone who participated in the panels — artist relations, publicity and promotion, video workshops, the press, radio, sales, distribution — couldn't, or wouldn't, distinguish between the commercial "new music" like Human League, Soft Cell, Flock of Seagulls and Haircut 100, and the other 10,000 examples who haven't yet (and may very well never) sell that many records. So it sort of turned into the newly rich few up against all the rest of the modest achievements that still make a difference: what's "new" about that? Let alone really musical.

Bill Nelson, former guitarist/songwriter with 70's sci-fi, post-glam futurist rock bands Be Bop Deluxe and Red Noise, was flown in from Britain. Along with such other producers as Rusty Egan, Trevor Horn, Kenny Laguna, Rick Ocasek and Martin Rushent, he took part in a panel whose range of discussion went basically nowhere. But then what do you do with questions like moderator Dan Heaps', which were on the level of "do you make formula records so you'll have definite hits?" and "we have several trendy producers on the panel and I'm just curious to know how it feels." (Rushent's answer to that one was great — he turned to Trevor (ABC) Horn and said, "do you want to go first?")

Some obvious truths were revealed. When Heaps brought up the issue of British producers' "little tolerance for the American market," Rusty Egan (Visage) hit that nail on the head. "The way I see it is that it's too money orientated," he said in a rather disgusted tone, "and if you don't invest a million dollars behind a band then their music will never see the light of day." There were also some (pseudo) surprises. Martin Rushent said that the synthesizer was the "folk instrument of the 80's"

— and got a strong round of applause for doing so.

Of all the panelists, Bill Nelson seemed the most genuine and, along with Rick Ocasek (Cars) he was also one of the least talkative. When he did get around to a statement it sounded like this: "the way I approach my own production is totally different probably to the way Martin and Trevor work in that I suppose I can only be objective to a certain degree about what I'm doing because, as an artist, obviously I have very emotional feelings about what I do which transcend any objectivity at times. The one contribution I can probably give to this seminar that we haven't talked about so far is any considerations from a production point of view that I might make have very little to do with what else is happening around me in the industry. In the end, it will produce a more original work and hopefully a work that will actually catch people's imaginations simply by not being too concerned with the kind of things that we've seemed to become concerned with at this seminar. And so in some ways I feel that to have to sit here and talk about it completely defeats the object in terms of creativity and the imagination. You can only achieve so much. You can't build a heart into something that's just a structure. We're talking about structures here, not the heart."

Nelson was also in New York to confirm the North American release of his third solo album, **The Love That Whirls**, on his own independent label, Cocteau Records. Some of you may remember his highly acclaimed solo debut a few years ago, **Quit Dreaming and Get Off the Beam/Sounding the Ritual Echo**. After that came **Das Kabinet**, a score that Nelson recorded especially for the Yorkshire Actors' stage adaptation of **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari**. As a producer, his credits and past work include the Skids' **Days in Europa**, Nash the Slash's British dance single **Novel Romance**, and early Flock of Seagulls' singles like **Talking** (on Cocteau) and **Telecommunication**, and the San Francisco-based electronic group The Units, as yet unreleased on 415 Records.

At 33 years of age, Bill Nelson's aptitudes are still expanding and it was a pleasure and privilege for SHADES to sit down and talk with him.

Shades: What initially prompted you to form your own label?

Nelson: It was between my losing my contract with EMI, which had more to do with EMI being taken over by another company and a lot of people being made redundant. It had nothing to do with the quality of the music, I'm talking about it purely in business terms. Between that and picking up a deal with Phonogram, who currently release my records in England, I had no way of getting records out at all. That's when I recorded the first EP for Cocteau. It was entitled **Do You Dream in Colour?** I formed the label to try and make a bit of a market place for my product. I also wanted to extend that a bit further and put things out that I was in love with. Some of it may have had a

minority appeal but we never manufactured huge quantities. We don't have huge overheads for staff and advertising and so on. We work within our own means and even though we may not be selling huge amounts of records, neither are we losing huge amounts of money. We're actually breaking even in most things after a period of time.

S: And then came the release of the debut LP on Cocteau, **Quit Dreaming and Get on the Beam/Sounding the Ritual Echo**.

N: That was kind of a drop window for things that I recorded for EMI, and they wouldn't touch it at the time. **Banal** was the first single lifted from the sessions that produced the **Quit Dreaming** album. We're talking about re-releasing it at the moment because being done through an independent label in England we didn't have the money to take it much further than we did.

S: It made it into the Top 20 didn't it?

N: Yeah. We released 3 singles from that album — **Banal**, **Living in My Limousine** and **Youth of Nation on Fire**. The irony is that since we signed a deal with Phonogram, the A&R guy had a lot of faith in what I was doing but their promotions department is disgusting. We've had far better radio play, press coverage and just general profile from doing things on Cocteau than we've had on anything to do with Phonogram. They've got the money and the facilities, but they're just not using them imaginatively enough. If you present them with something they don't understand, they won't work; they kind of go through the motions. You have to have people committed. You've got to get the passions aroused in those people, get them out there persuading people that they should be playing it on the radio.

S: You did several interviews when **Quit Dreaming** came out, and you kept pointing out that album was written 2 years beforehand and that at that time you already had 2 new albums' worth of songs.

N: Yeah, it's funny, isn't it? A lot of the stuff that's on **The Love That Whirls** was actually in demo from when I was doing all of those interviews for the previous album, **Quit Dreaming**. In fact, I finished the album during the middle of last summer. I gave it to Phonogram and they were all going, "we can't hear any singles on this album. It's a great album but what are we going to do for a single?" I told them I'd go back into the studio and record more songs. I finished in November of '81 and gave them two and a half albums' worth of material. They were really surprised. They didn't know how they were going to assimilate any of it. They didn't know how the hell they were going to come up with a decision. Finally, 8 months later, in June of '82, **The Love That Whirls** was released in England. It took them that long before they got the album out, which I think is completely ludicrous. In this day and age where ideas have to be communicated very quickly, you don't let contemporary ideas sit on the shelf — you get them out and then you move forward and change.

S: How did **The Love That Whirls** do when it was finally released?

N: It's been doing reasonably well. It was a Top 20 album in England. We wanted to do more but again, I don't know, maybe I might be fingering the record company far too much; but I know for a fact that it came out the same week as the ABC album. Now ABC have had 2 hit singles for Phonogram and it's obvious to me that a workforce that has the amount of acts to deal with like Phonogram does is going to be instructed by the heads of the company to work on an act who's already provided 2 hit singles rather than work on an act like myself which is doing something a little bit more subversive musically.

S: Can you possibly talk about the subversive side to Bill Nelson?

N: Yeah...umm. it gets very detailed in that...that...I mean, subversiveness and the politics of music rather than social politics. There is a politic you can actually apply to sounds and notes. There is a way of subverting a public ear that is tuned by the media to mediocrity. There is a way of getting around that obstacle. There are ways of introducing sounds and clusters of notes whose implications go far beyond just sounds and clusters of notes. If you can get a public to adjust and enjoy a subversive cluster of notes, the implications of that go much further. If they can enjoy that then they can enjoy the abstract in terms of thought. Eventually, if the extension goes far enough, they start to relate personal life experiences to new ideas that have their own abstract concepts. I really think you can actually change things, very subtly, through music, without sometimes even having to say a word. Sometimes a lyric can be all too specific.

S: Well, a good example of that is **the Ritual Echo**.

N: Yeah, I'm very pleased with that. That was done for no other reason at the time than to make myself happy through a period when I was experiencing very heavy times financially, which I still am in a way. I've had a lot of problems over the past 2 years which stemmed from rather underhand and insensitive...from my previous management company with Be Bop Deluxe. During the 5 years I was with the company they were supposed to be dealing with all my business affairs, keeping things up to date. They paid no income tax — I've suddenly been confronted by huge tax bills for a period of time, 5-6 years ago. When I left EMI, I spent 2 years out of the public eye making tapes. It was as if I'd suddenly disappeared from the music scene. The fact that I was working my ass off behind the scenes, nobody realized — and I mean, there's been no great income for the last 2 records; for instance, all the publishing rights to **Quit Dreaming** were owned by my ex-management company. Those were bad times for me but I've learned quite a few things along the way.

S: In particular?

N: This is slightly a distraction from that but it does relate. One of the things I felt most strongly about in a social sense, politically speaking, and it's really concerned with England more than any other country. I'm not that experienced about the school



system in North America. I really think the English school system concentrates far too much on academic things in that it's outfitting for tasks — jobs in industry or offices. It's career oriented in the capitalist sense — which is not wrong. I feel there should be an equal emphasis on aesthetics; an appreciation of music and visuals. If you compare a country like France with a country like England, there is somehow in the French a more natural and educated sense visually. For instance, if you were to go to a cheap store in England you would get cheap, shoddy goods. If you were to go to a cheap store in France you'd get goods that don't cost much but they're well designed and they're nice colours. There is a sense in the French where they won't accept anything below a certain level regardless of how cheap and poor we are. Everything has a sense of style and a sense of knowing. The British are quite happy to accept mediocrity at times. It's probably because of the war thing. Designs shouldn't cost money. Obviously, materials cost money. If you want to buy a silk jacket it's going to cost a lot of money, but the shape of that jacket costs nothing more than some guy's imagination who's designing it. It's a very presumptuous thing for me to say but by getting people to like some of the things that I'm doing might raise their level of appreciation, mentally and orally.

I originally started out in fine arts. I started to apply what I learned at art college — the appreciation of colour, shape and form — to actual music. If it works for a painting, it's an aesthetic; it could apply to anything — a dress or whatever. I started using some of that quite unapologetically at first. If you do it within your music it will spread into other areas. I'm interested in the kind of ethic that propagates eloquence, elegance and style — the appreciation of detail and finer things. People generally can't be bothered with that, not so much because they don't have the ability but because they're kind of brainwashed into the fact that it seems a useless thing to be bothered about anyway. They don't feel there's a practical or financial reward in it, whereas the rewards from that are greater than money could ever buy.

S: Here's a rather strange analogy for you: would you say **The Love That Whirls** is a beautifully framed French Impressionist painting or an Etcha-Sketch?

N: I consider it to be more of a painting, whereas I consider the Red Noise album to be more of an Etcha-Sketch, although there are equally as many things happening beneath the surface within the two. **The Love That Whirls** is a personal statement in that most of the subject matter is very crucial to me. That's why the album is subtitled **Diary of a Thinking Heart**. The Red Noise album, in contrast, were concepts that were formed by me, but actually concepts that exist regardless of me. They're specifically about a very near future. I'd done so many sci-fi type songs with Be Bop. When I formed Red Noise I wanted to consolidate all these science fiction ideas and make them relevant in some way. It's part of **Clockwork Orange**, it's part of 1984 and it's got a sort of Mao Communism thing in it. They're just conceptions. They're not actually about me, they're more in the way I was seeing things. **The Love That Whirls** is very different to that. The reason why I made the distinction between one being a painting and the other a cartoon is because the new album is much more dragged out from the heart.

S: Why did you choose an unusual album title like **The Love That Whirls**?

N: I wanted to make a record, a series of statements that come to terms with mysticism; a kind of religious spirit, and the passion of love, the eros aspect, the sexual aspect. I wanted to bring these things together because I'm convinced they're related. I saw this thing about dance and sexuality in a pop sense, which is a modern folk sense in a way, that the idea of dance is a mating ritual. When I was a teenager we went to dancehalls to meet girls as well as dance and listen to the music. So it was this whole display of sexuality through dance and the kind of costumes that people wear to go dancing. That relates to an orgasmic ecstasy thing that comes through in religious thought and dancing. The Whirling Dervishes are what I had in mind. They whirl around and around in their white skirts for hours on end into a trance-like state. I didn't even conceive the title itself but it all came together very naturally. It's an unfinished film by Kenneth Anger. He's an occultist as well — he was bound up with a lot of the works of Aleister Crowley. Kenneth's a very strange man but he's made some extremely touching films. He started this film called **The Love That Whirls** but he never finished it. The occult significance tied in. It was about all the things that seemed to add up to some attitude that I've adopted over the years. It fit in with the music nicely. It was an elegant poetic image.

S: Did it just get domestic release in North America?

N: In America the album's come out on Jem. In Canada we've just signed a deal with A&M. It's the first North America release I've had since the Red Noise album. This week I've only been attending the seminars and to do some interviews with publications like SHADES and try to help spread the

word around. I did a bit of a tour in the States last year which was done on a very tight budget. I'm hoping to come back and do some dates later this year, including some Canadian dates as well. I don't know if I brought a band and did the things that I really wanted to do at the moment, whether it would help or hinder. There are places we can play and I'm sure we could do reasonably well within them; but at the moment, we need to be able to take something further. We can't do bigger halls with flashy presentation because it's too expensive. Going into small clubs and playing to people who are converted is great fun and very gratifying. It's a return of affection, but it doesn't actually help to get anything across to more people. At the moment I'm really concerned with the idea of trying to extend the horizons, not just for the simple financial thing. It would also help spread the word a bit. Although that probably makes me sound slightly subversive, doesn't it?

S: The more the better. I was wondering if you could talk about the instrumental **Das Kabinet** album that came out between **Quit Dreaming** and **The Love That Whirls**.

N: I've been involved in 2 projects now with a theatre company called the Yorkshire Actors' Company, who are a reasonably young theatre company dealing with avant-garde ideas presented to a pop audience. They wanted to break out of the confines of the traditional theatre audience. They wanted to take it into rock areas and present plays to a rock audience. I had them on tour with me and we did a club and disco tour. They were the warm-up act. What you got was a play and then the band came on. You can imagine at a disco, people were just out to drink and dance — well this time around they had to sit through a play. It was a pretty daring thing to do but it went down very well.

What they did with this particular production of **The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Das Kabinet)** was to take the old German Expressionist black and white film, I believe it was shot in 1919, and they did a stage adaptation of it. They wore very simple black and white make-up, black costumes, no sets and there was very little lighting. If there were any kind of objects to be portrayed, like a bed, the members of the cast would become a bed — one person would bend over and form the position of the bed and somebody would lie on them. Somebody would become a candle and his finger would

be the flame. Somebody else would have to snuff it out. Somebody else would be a clock. So the whole thing was that all the objects were people. Each actor had several roles, there are never any explanations as to when each actor changes character. It's up to the audience to catch the transition.

The company asked me to write the music for the production. I attended the rehearsals for a couple of weeks and timed the different sequences and followed the script. I was fairly familiar with the film because when Be Bop toured at one time, we used to use clips from it on the screen. I recorded the album on a 4-track machine and released it through Cocteau — after that I worked with them on **La Belle et La Bête**, adapted from Cocteau's movie (**Beauty and the Beast**), an extra album that's available with the first 10,000 copies of **The Love That Whirls**. Whereas **Caligari** was a very expressionist film, **Beauty and the Beast** was much more impressionistic; it's much more dreamy. **Caligari**'s like a nightmare. **Beauty and the Beast** is an ironic and tragic dream really. It's quite tender. Whereas **Caligari** was recorded on a 4-track, I had an art's council grant to help me put together the music for **Beauty and the Beast**. That grant helped me buy an 8-track machine.

S: What are some of the future production projects that you've got lined up?

N: I'm working with Richard Jobson at the moment (former vocalist for the Skids). Virgin Records are very desperate for Richard to write a hit single. I'm going to be working with a Malaysian girl called Marchella Mall, who's 18 years old; I'm doing a single with her called **The Art of Dying**. I'm working with a guy called Paul Hampshire who's done very well in Japan with a band called Panache, although he's English. I suppose the gimmick that he's been known for in Japan is that he looks exactly like a girl. He's a reasonable singer. The thing that attracted me to doing this was that we're going to be recording a single that was written by a

good friend of mine called Snips (SHADES #16). I'm also going to remix a single that Snips just finished called **Mac The Knife**. I'm going to Japan to record with the Yellow Magic Orchestra; I'll be playing a lot of different things on their next album. I've got a brand new mini-album out at the end of September — it'll feature YMO's Yuki Takahashi on drums, Mick Karn (Japan) on bass, Tom Dolby on keyboards and John Hassell on trumpet.

S: I've always admired your determination and perseverance. You've recorded over 12 albums, been in several different groups, produced various musicians, written theatre scores — yet you're still accessible, more than willing to communicate with different people. Everything doesn't depend on rock music; but it's going to take people a long time to realize that.

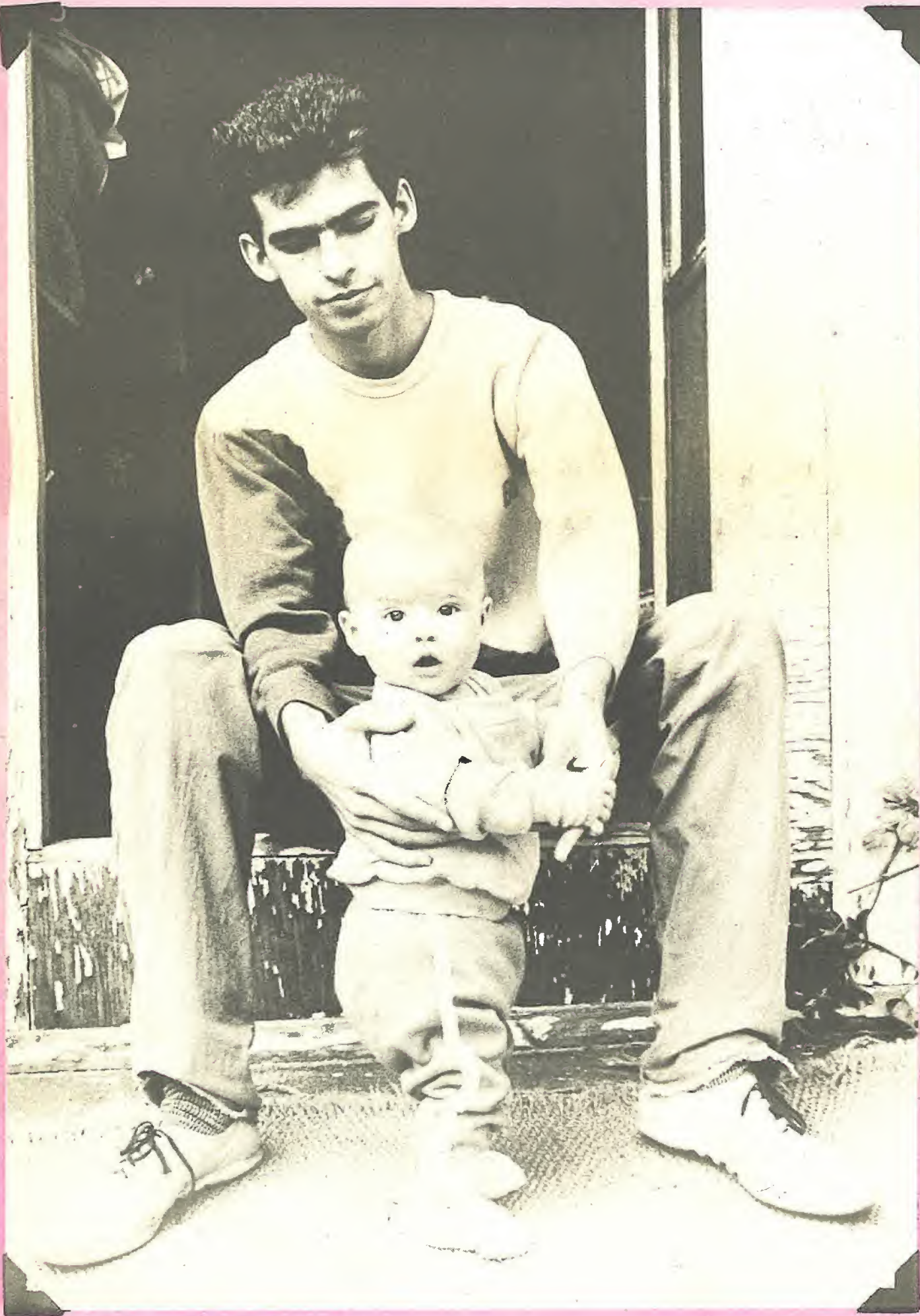
N: I've never actually sat down and categorized what I've got to get through to people. To sit down and talk about my music and rationalize; for me it seems to defeat the object. Everything that I've done has happened really quite naturally and organically. I've been accused by people, particularly in the British press, of being kind of precocious and pretentious. Now, pretension seems to denote some kind of unnatural intent that's completely outside your own personal reference — y'know, trying to be something that you're not. Everything I've done seems to have happened of its own accord and then afterwards I've rationalized. I think you learn much more after the event by looking back and then calculating what happened. Why did I feel that way? How come that particular lyric had a fascination for me? I'm starting to look at life a lot differently now. I'm starting now, gradually, at this late date I suppose, to find out what place I have in the scheme of things, not in terms of commercial success but what my creative voice is and that it does have its point of view. A real individual voice is important regardless of whether it achieves as much as somebody else's. The fact that it's individual and is heard by some people is important.



Photos (altered) by P.L. Noble



# ROCK



**Tokio Fugit**  
photographed





# BABY



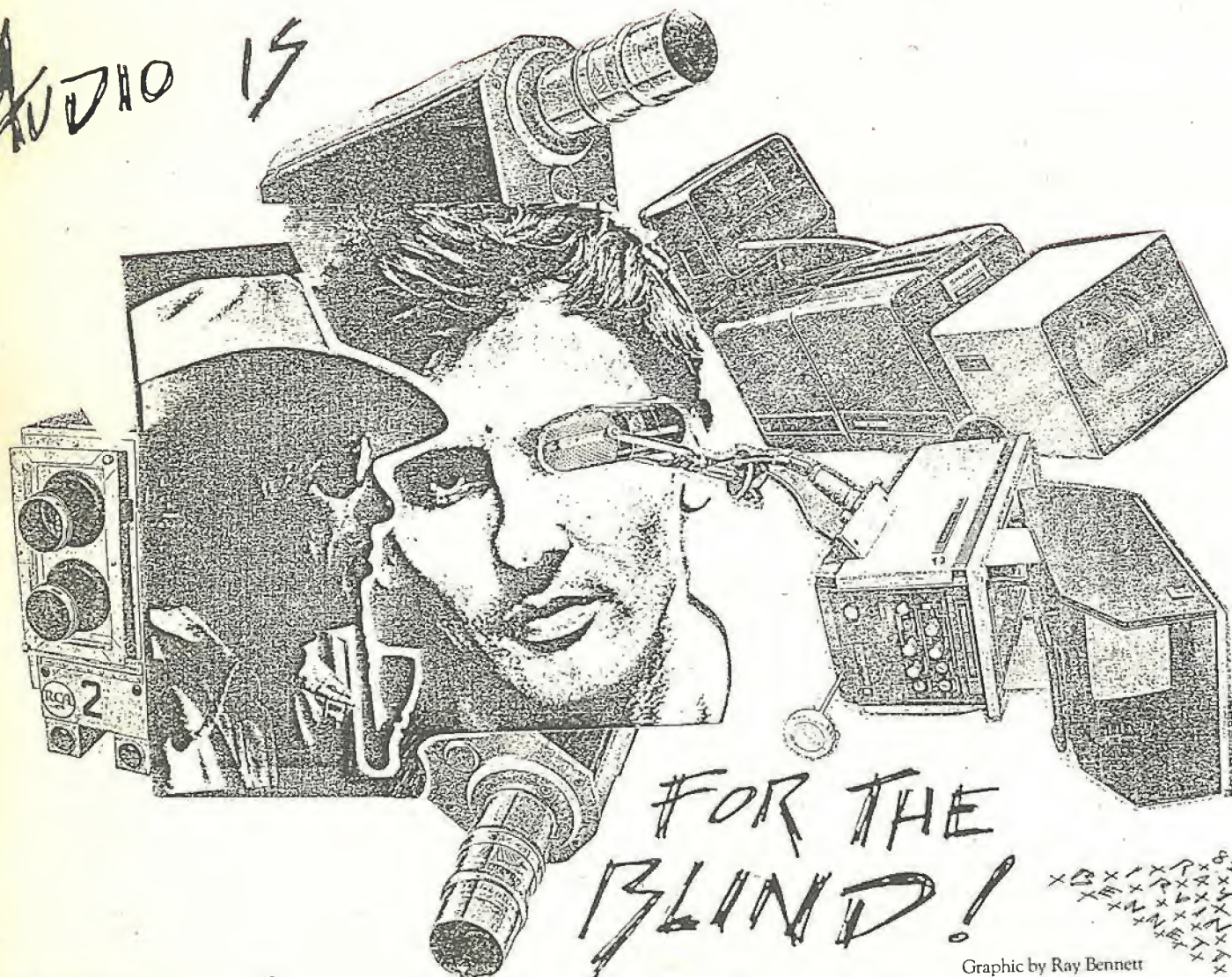
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AUDIO IS



FOR THE BLIND!

Graphic by Ray Bennett

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL BLEY IN MARCH, 1982, IN MIAMI, FLA. PART OF "NEW PERSPECTIVES", A SERIES COVERING MUCH OF BLEY'S MUSIC, AND ITS EXTENSION INTO VIDEO, FILM, AND...

by Geordie McDonald

PAUL BLEY'S impressive musical output includes approximately fifty available albums (as catalogued in *Le Jazz Hot*, reprinted in *Coda* #166, April 1979). From 1953 to the present, he can be heard moving through several emerging musical sensibilities in the revolutionary company of such jazz luminaries as Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, Don Ellis, Ornette Coleman, Jimmy Guiffre, Carla Bley, Annette Peacock.

It would be hard to encapsulate the essence of Bley's sound, but an advanced, gentle, introspective artist is at work here.

And the work does not stop with his audio output, because, with the advent of **Improvising Artists Incorporated** and Paul's collaboration with video artist Carol Goss, for the first time a label has issued commercially available video and audio collaborations done with a variety of video syntheses.

In this period Bley began to collaborate with yet another series of electronic as well as acoustic musicians, people like Jaco Pastorius, Pat Metheny, Bill Connors, as well as artists from his earlier period such as Gary Peacock, Sun Ra and Perry Robinson.

Recently, Bley was involved with the award-winning film, *Imagine the Sound*. His record *Quiet Song* took the Grand Prix de Disque.

In the following dialogue we are again fortunate to get a glimpse of the future through the eyes of one of Canada's (now the world's) most creative, in the true sense of the word, and prolific artists. A conversation with Paul Bley is always lively, but watch it! Don't ignore the density of the utilizable information contained; information that comes from Paul's vast and successful experience as musician and entrepreneur. Implicit in the following is a challenge to your imagination, your pocketbook, and your career.

GEORDIE McDONALD: Paul, at the beginning of your career you joined the technological flow with a 12" LP and some 16mm film. How have you developed, both musically and from a technological standpoint?

PAUL BLEY: It was more a question of the development of copyrights. It was the next copyright to get, in a chain of copyrights. Someone decided we have to have a picture to go with the sound — so it seemed like a reason to stretch one's imagination and use that as an additional palette.

G.McD.: One medium complements another. We only divide them up at times because of the limitations of the transmission medium.

P.B.: Exactly!

Audio is for the blind;  
Braille is for the sensitive;  
Touch is healing.

Let's just say it would be better for me to play you — it would be better for you for me to play you than to play my instrument. It bypasses the intellect.

G.McD.: Which is necessary with some people.

P.B.: And fun!

G.McD.: So in a sense people can relax more with this kind of medium: it's not like reading a book.

P.B.: It's a lot like providing an atmosphere for another person. A winter in the Canadian Northlands can be acoustically grim.

G.McD.: The presence of sound can warm it up.

P.B.: Yeah, and keep your sanity. It seems that when one plays music all the time — assuming it's music one can listen to seriously — your brain gets occupied, sort of ensnared in the intelligence of the music, and it doesn't keep making its loops on your I.O.U.'s.

G.McD.: How viable are these artistic videos in the face of current market givens?

P.B.: You can come up with a lot of toys for the child. The child may only pick half of them. I'm betting that the digital-audio compact disc of Philips and Sony will succeed with its laser technology, where the video disc as a marketing venture so far is a disaster. The video disc doesn't hold a large measure of improvement over the picture of video tape, but the digital-audio disc, laser, is a tremendous improvement over the analog item. So it has to catch on.

G.McD.: Is there a difference in this situation between Europe and America? I seem to hear more about video artists' work in Europe.

P.B.: You have to understand that the hierarchy of video adoption by the public around the globe goes like this: Japan is first, America second, and Europe third, and so on down the line. There is a large gap between the available software in this country and in Europe. There is lots of it here and some of it there — so there's more of an appetite there.

G.McD.: Recently you were in the award-winning film *Imagine the Sound*.

P.B.: Right. And I was very surprised, when I saw the film in a theatre, to find that in fact it had ended up as something quite similar to what we had been doing with *Improvising Artists'* videocassettes, without the interviews. Because it was my feeling that to market something internationally, the fewer (English) words the better.

G.McD.: No cultural limitations built into the finished product.

P.B.: Exactly. Although — I had also thought that videocassettes shouldn't be titled, like movies, and I was wrong about that. We have since titled them, and the audience loves the titles. Just like M.G.M. G.McD.: Perhaps international titles can be created.

P.B.: In any event, there should be a video screen on every wall of a home, perhaps of varying sizes.

Obviously the arts are going to join the Giant Number Revolution. When they ask an artist fifteen years from now for an identity card it will not only have the first eight numbers of his social security — it will have every note the artist ever played. And don't try to forge that identity!

G.McD.: Conditions for artists are changing in new ways, so an artist will have to prepare himself slightly differently...

P.B.: Well, there are some immediate technical problems. If you have done any recording so far — audio, film, video — it may be worthless.

G.McD.: Obsolete.

P.B.: Worse than obsolete — there is no way people are going to want to pollute their new toys with the bad fidelity of your old stuff.

G.McD.: "Don't stick your dirty cassette in my shiny machine!"

P.B.: Exactly. Have you heard an old wax cylinder played? That's what analog sounds like. But the nice thing about the arts is that your slate is wiped clean every so often by the inferiority of the technology you have been working with. You have to start all over again.

G.McD.: New opportunities.

P.B.: Yes: in the form of a new demand for what you do, even if you still do the same thing. There is a temptation to repeat what you have been doing — which of course is a waste of time and it's no fun at all.

And you have to understand what the utilization of your music is going to be. There's a company, just started this year, which will debit your bank account for the digital music being sent to you — which you may record, or just listen to — and the moment you hear it is the moment the money leaves your bank account and enters the company's. Perhaps there'll be a new Renaissance for artists, since all the bank accounts and all the engaging systems will be digitally recording usage, without BMI or ASCAP. The bank accounts will be transferring around, so that anybody playing your stuff somewhere will be feeding your bank account, direct, without waiting ninety days for the bank to find the paper that they lost.

G.McD.: You can pay the rent and be free to do more work.

P.B.: Exactly. And for me, now, art is a utility. I'm interested in the Paul Bley Utility. You turn it on like a light bulb, it has a real function. Being intelligently involved with mathematical processes and with ratios and measurements is only one of the sides of it. It's a utility because you think it's a utility. You want it, as a utility. I don't want to have to open any boxes to start my utility; I want it switchable. Therefore I need to consider the implications of twenty-four hours of what I do, as opposed to twenty-four minutes. That's the new palette that carries on the tradition of the three-minute 78rpm and the twenty-minute LP and so on.

G.McD.: Always getting longer.

P.B.: The palette is getting longer. Duration is increasing. The new digitally recorded stuff will emphasize the highs and lows: hence there will be a need for more percussion on these recordings, to utilize these new audio bands.

G.McD.: With increased capacities.

P.B.: Right. You see, video finally allowed us to make movies that played with the lights on, so if you devoted a four-inch square on one wall — you could have your favourite idiomatic genre broadcast on that screen. With four six-hour Beta cassettes — Beta has a changer — you're in business.

G.McD.: You're talking about a technological explosion which artists can use now in a wider, more accessible range.

P.B.: Well, you're putting it positively. I tend to look at it antagonistically. I see technology as threatening to eliminate the validity of an artist by

antiquing her or him. Not only do you have to learn new skills, but you have to learn what the skills emphasize, and develop the aspect of your work that the technology implies. It's kind of nice for an older artist, though, who can just sit back and say, "Do you want it with two pairs of pants? Whatever way you want it, we'll take your order!" But the younger artists are still trying to find out what it is that they're doing. They don't want to hear about these things —

G.McD.: But maybe they should listen. If you're maybe going to make something that in a short time won't be of any use, maybe you should do it in the new way in the first place. And I maintain there can be a kind of tedium if you're always using the same medium to connect you up with the end user.

P.B.: Yeah. But the end user is really me. I'm the end user of everything I make. So the next thing I'm making is the twenty-four-hour abstract videotape, which we guarantee on the box, "If you can distinguish any representational aspects of this tape..." It's twenty-four hours' worth of tape, on four reels, and that can entertain you while you're asleep, you can leave it on when you go out — you certainly don't take your painting off the wall when you go out to the supermarket!

G.McD.: Right. It's a constant.

P.B.: Yeah, that's the utility aspect of it — switchable utility. I'd like to have an all-Brazilian vocalist for the Brazilian utility. And most probably will.

G.McD.: Brazil: so you're talking about something that's happening globally, bypassing borders and languages. The global implication of this is that perhaps artists should no longer travel in the same way that they did.

P.B.: Well, the best reason to travel, of course, is to play different concerts with different people in different places. You play a concert in Brazil or Argentina, and the concert consists of you making it all up. I always play the place I'm in, down to the room, and different countries, even more. So traveling is always fun, because you feed off the experience. Let's just say that when you're performing it doesn't matter where you are, it's always fun.

G.McD.: I wonder if video will go up in space ships.

P.B.: As soon as you say "space" you're talking about bouncing your signal off satellites, which means that the guy in space could receive it, and someone in China could receive it.

It's a utility, it costs money, that channel costs money, all the time it costs money, by the hour or by the week — it's a utility, right? The nice thing about this situation is that everybody gets paid, and it shouldn't cost more than ten or twelve dollars a month, like any other cable service — it could be lower, because the programming is totally automated. And there's no language spoken, so you're not only a commercial-free service, but a word-free service. (By the way, if there are any inventor-types out there who could build a device that could remove the words — not the lyrics necessarily, but the words spoken by announcers, and station breaks and news and so forth — from radio broadcasts, and just leave the recorded performances, my cassettes and I would be most grateful.)

G.McD.: Recently it's been found that some of the original TV broadcasts, that we thought would be contained within the Earth's atmosphere by the ionosphere, are in fact still going on out there — they are some of our first signals into outer space.

P.B.: You have to go to Venus to catch that show. Almost as bad as me — you have to go to Vienna to catch Bley. Travel does change you: every trip you make, you have another notch on your belt, your intellectual belt. For instance, the way you perceive your life changes, and these changes are describable — you can describe them yourself. And it's not necessarily a willed change.

G.McD.: We become ourselves by what happens to us.

P.B.: As soon as you start free improvising — over time, say a couple of years — you can come to some conclusions. It's a form of research, because it's not practised widely as a complete art form. And it helps in terms of time, relationships, especially when you're dealing with situations which involve random events. I found, when there was six months between the times I touched my instrument, and both those times were recorded, that even though I had made no conscious effort to change what I did, it had changed, exactly six months' worth. It changes in spite of you. Once you get the artistic process going —

G.McD.: Nothing can stop it.

P.B.: So — that might open you to the idea that certain kinds of experience might change you dramatically. I make it a point to change everybody's life that I come in contact with, dramatically. I might send you to Mali, for instance, if I see you as someone with an unstable enough life to change your geography. It's a power I have.

It's like when you ask someone a question. If you're asking the question of somebody you think has something to tell you, you're better off not limiting the answer by your question: you just say, "Speak to me." You don't want an answer to your question, because your question may not be good enough, or the person has got too rich an answer for any question you know how to ask.

No questions, please!



# OOH BABY

An Interview with  
Joe Bowie and defunkt  
by Elliott Lefko and Peter Noble

defunkt, the St. Louis-New York funk-jazz unit made their Toronto debut last month when they opened up for Steel Pulse and performed by themselves the next night at Larry's Hideaway. The six-piece band stars Joe Bowie on trombone and lead vocals. Mr. Bowie, 28, is the youngest of three St. Louis-born Bowie brothers. The eldest, Lester, 40, is known as the doctor's coat-sporting trumpet player of the free-form jazz group The Art Ensemble Of Chicago.

The Toronto gig was tempered by a lukewarm response at the Steel Pulse show, and a miniscule crowd (about the same size as the seventy-five who saw Comsat Angels a couple months back) for their solo show at Larry's. What made it worthwhile, though, was the avid response of those who did enjoy the music. They didn't just like it: they thought it was some of the best they'd ever heard!

defunkt command a stage in a downtown-dressed up manner. Bowie and trumpet player John Mulkerin stand straight in their best James Brown-disciplined horn section posture. On stage right bassist Kim Clarke and guitarist Richard Martin play their instruments with a relaxed and effortless charm that belies the force of their playing. Ms. Clarke and drummer Kenny Martin, however, stay in the background much of the time setting the groove for the band's large catalogue of funk numbers. Bowie's right-hand man Kelvyn Bell is a lean strong guitar player who is equally comfortable in funk and jazz.

The group's songs are immediately accessible, ranging from the Motown-influenced *For The Love Of Money* to the aptly-titled *Cocktail Hour* (*Blue Bossa*), to the free-spirited *Ooh Baby* to the funk-ed-up raves like *Avoid The Funk*, with the band collectively — and literally — spitting the lyrics out in a shower of funk.

At the end of a day-and-a-half search, SHADES finally tracked down Mssrs. Bowie, Martin, and Bell, and deescussed defunkt.

SHADES: *The concept of having lyrics in a jazz group seems to be contradictory.*

MARTIN: It would seem so but it creates a certain kind of interest and intrigue. People are wondering WHAT IS GOING ON HERE? Are they rockers, are they jazz players? And all I can say is, it's like looking at any kind of art, everytime you look at it you should be able to get something different out of it. Some people come to listen to the actual players, some people come here to hear the singing, some come to dance, so when you look at the group you can focus in on something different each time. Is it free jazz, or what? That's why Downbeat Magazine categorized it as jazz-punk-funk. That's what has happened with defunkt, certain people were just put in the group and it just happened to work.

SHADES: *Joe, Richard Martin said that you didn't tell the members of defunkt what you wanted to hear, or how to play, but did you have a concept of what it would sound like together?*

BOWIE: Oh, yes, of course. I have a concept of life. I transcend those concepts with music. It's about rebellion from the frustrations of what you were doing in the past. About young people, and tradition and authenticity. About high-energy, about high emotional content, and about an energetic visual concept. All these things comprise the ideas I wanted in the band.

SHADES: *Are you confident that people will come around to the concept of defunkt?*

BOWIE: Well I know once the people hear they have to give it to us. Because the music is so real and there's very high technology involved. It's the highest of all the forms and I think it's just a matter of time before the people hear and enjoy it. Some times it's a little over their head, even in a commercial venue — it's so much playing going on.

The funk tunes we do are very groovy tunes. It's African, it's polyrhythmic, that's why a lot of people call our music jazz. With the funk we use every instrument playing a different rhythm. That's what makes it roll around like a wheel. Once that groove starts it's like a freight train, it's multi-layered and it can just push and push, indefinitely. SHADES: *When did defunkt begin?*

BELL: I've been working with Joe from before defunkt was created. We started working in a group called The Human Arts Ensemble, me and Joe were sidemen in this group, in 1978, a drummer Charles "Bobo" Shaw was the leader of that group, we played avant-garde jazz. In fact me and Joe are both from St. Louis (as is Richard Martin) and we played together in funk bands, and avant-garde bands. So we put together defunkt in the last part of 1979 as like "Shit let's go out and

make some cash real quick, and work some of these punk rock clubs." We did our first album with another drummer and bass player. We got together about two hours before the concert and put together these tunes, the same tunes we're playing now. We all knew each other real well musically so it was no problem. So we just got up and hit. That's how the first concept jumped off and we got a lot of press in New York. From there we did our first European tour. We had a keyboard player named Martin Fisher who had a terrible accident, he fell off a building. We dedicated our first album to him. Then we added Richard Martin, and John Mulkerin, and Kenny Martin, and we auditioned for a bass player. We auctioned all these cats, but Kim came and smoked all of them. She wiped them. Then we played some jazz, cause you know we play all kinds of music, so a cat coming in this band has to be able to play the whole history of the music. She had her jazz licks down perfectly.

SHADES: *What do you have to say about the way the band is being accepted by audiences?*

BELL: Well you know it's like this band represents a revolution. It combines all the concepts of black music that have been created, the be-bop era of the Twenties, the Louis Armstrong-type sound, all the way through the avant-garde music, the funk, and rock and roll, the whole thing. It's all combined into one sound. And we're dealing with different expressive aspects of the music. You dealt with blues, you dealt with emotion, expression; and when you got to be-bop the blues got more intellectual, and as it got to avant-garde it became more intuitive. So we combine all those aspects of music, the emotional, the intellectual, and the intuitive. I feel like the intuitive aspect, that avant-garde thing, is the most important because that's what mixes all the styles together. That's the spoon that stirs the pot. So it's a revolution and we expect the whole music scene to change as a result. Once the people can focus their ears on this sound ... it takes a minute for people to learn how to focus their ears, you have to learn how to listen with a different part of yourself. You can listen with your body as well as your mind and just what you're feeling.

SHADES: *When one thinks of defunkt you picture a group with a great deal of style. But how do you define style?*

BOWIE: I think it's a matter of maturity. It's like another step of maturity for a rock and roll orchestra and its audience. It's finesse, it's having a good audience, good presence, and a lot of honesty. Honesty is the main ingredient to play the music we're playing. You have to have a positive attitude. SHADES: *Why the name defunkt?*

BOWIE: A journalist Alan Platt thought of that name and I liked it. defunkt is the beginning and the end. The beginning of the end. The end of things as we know it. I think that our entire lifestyle will take drastic changes. As a result of wars, and nuclear wars. People will have to maintain another existence. Luxuries? There won't be any. Can you imagine the situation after they'll drop an atomic bomb on Chicago, and one on New York, and one on L.A.? Can you imagine the social implications that will affect survivors? They will have it the hardest. Can you imagine the food shortages, the water shortages, the contamination? So it's going to take another type of person to live through this period. Only the very strong will survive. That's what we're going to have, I believe. The catastrophe of nuclear war. People who survive are going to have a long way to go.

SHADES: *Your song lyrics can be pretty alarming sometimes. What for example do you mean by "I'm just a faceless nigger from the streets, with his colour with his blood, I'd say you shouldn't be alive."*

BOWIE: That is self-explanatory because the black man in the United States and basically all over the world is faceless, in a literal point of view. It's just being aware of the situation as it has been and as it is now. I'm just a faceless nigger from the streets. And that's what they all are, that's what's been going on for hundreds of years. It's gotten much better but in getting better there have been a lot of things that have been lost too. Because of the nature of how the things were attempted to improve. For instance in the cities with welfare programs, and drug programs. All of these things are destructive, in another sense. If you put a family on welfare for a long time they won't even have the strength, the ingenuity, to move out of their situation. So it causes laziness, which is frightening. Anyways all of those things are going to be abolished soon, as we prepare for war. There won't be any social security or anything like that. In fact they're slowly trying to ease that out now. All that will be gone and one will have to learn to make it on strength as much as possible.

SHADES: *Why the title for your new album ThermoNuclearSweat?*

BOWIE: Well that's the period that we're living in. I call it the thermo-nuclear sweat period, in which we're waiting for the people that run the world to test their nuclear weapons that they currently have. See, ever since the beginning of time Man has always used every weapon that he's created. I just deal with history, not prophecies. So he's going to use 50 megaton bombs too. 'Cause he got 'em. Just

like the atom bomb when they first invented that. They tested it and that's what I think is going to happen now. It's an obsession to try everything that they've created. There's a lot of ego involved in that concept. And insecurity too. History has taught me that there's no hope. Man should not think that he's better than everything that's come before, or that he's any smarter. So I just have to go with the direction of humanity which has been totally destructive.

SHADES: *defunkt seem to cross over all types of musical boundaries. You've said that you played before jazz audiences, funk audiences, and recently in Toronto a reggae audience. That must really be rewarding to you.*

BELL: It is. The music is dealing with the emotional and the intellectual. We've been pretty fortunate that we've been able to hit all the spots. I think right now we're working more than most people.

SHADES: *Three of the members of defunkt are from St. Louis, a city that seems to have produced a lot of good music over the years. Tell us about the scene there.*

BELL: St. Louis is a great place for music because it has a great history of music. When the music came up the river from New Orleans, all the blues, all these cats travelled up the river first before they went to New York, they stopped off in Memphis and St. Louis. And they ended up going to Chicago. So St. Louis has a strong tradition, of blues and Dixieland, the whole thing. Cats used to work on riverboats, that was one of the gigs you worked on the riverboats and travelled from city to city. As I grew up I met cats who used to play with Bird (Charlie Parker) and Miles (Davis). Miles is from East St. Louis. Charlie Parker was from Kansas City. Same thing with Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry. I mean they could play. So from as far back as I can remember I used to hang out with those cats. I can remember studying with this drummer by the name of Joe Charles, he was playing drums with (John) Coltrane for a minute. Coltrane

wanted him to come with the band but he had seven kids and couldn't see himself going out on the road. He used to sing be-bop to me. He used to sing the solos and make me play them on the guitar. He was a fat cat about 350 pounds. So it was just a great tradition of music. There was also another group called The Black Artists Group which Joe and myself were a part of. It included Oliver Lake (Jump Up) and Julius Hemphill, it was an organization of creative music that came out of St. Louis. There was all this great music just sitting around the city. That was another reason for the diversity, I could do funk gigs, jazz gigs, straight-up heavy blues gigs. As a working musician in St. Louis there was a variety of music that I could play. So that's how I got involved in playing all these different types of music. It was all just music to me, I didn't see any barriers.

SHADES: *Why is it that all the musicians we've been talking about, Miles, Dizzy, the Bowie brothers, are all black?*

BELL: That's where I came up. I came up around black musicians. They were like the strongest cats on the street. As far as the streets were concerned they were the cats playing the most shit. It's people's music, it's like the blues, that was the root of all of it. It all came from a suffering thing, living in America, and being suppressed, you needed something to get off. So the music was the great release of energy. You see, music used to be a very powerful force at one time. Africans had very strong use for music. They used to communicate messages on drums, like Bell Telephone. So when the slaves came to America, they used to communicate from one plantation to another, saying come next Friday we're going to get out of here, fuck this slavery shit. So when they found that they were playing this thing on drums they wouldn't allow them to play anymore. It went underground and became rebel music. I think we're just continuing in that tradition.

P.L. Noble





by Mark Leach

*Hold summer in your hand, pour summer in a glass, a tiny glass of course, the smallest tingling sip for children; change the season in your veins by raising glass to lip and tilting summer in.*

Ray Bradbury, from **Dandelion Wine**.

Granted that any connection between the writing of Ray Bradbury and the music of San Francisco's Punks is tenuous at best and may exist only in my mind, the fact remains that I have difficulty listening to the Punks demo tape without thinking of Bradbury passages like the one above. What the Punks represent to me is summer, and a particularly mythical kind of summer at that. Bonnie Hayes, the Punks vocalist and *raison d'être*, may not have Bradbury's photographic memory of childhood but she can capture the bittersweet feeling of growing up almost as effectively. And her evoking of summers past is refreshing because it doesn't presuppose that enjoying summer necessarily means you need to disconnect your nervous system from your brain and lumber about like mindless smiling robots, as the Beach Boys would have us do.

The Punks sound is what I will have to label, with great reluctance, intelligent pop. That's a minor genre that's been growing of late with the emergence of a few Scottish bands headed by Altered Images, and by the somewhat arrogant intention of England's Heaven 17 to remake 60's hits in what they consider to be improved versions; versions with great production and absolutely no soul. The Punks are unlike these bands in many ways, however; for example, they are unconcerned about putting on display a complete entertainment package like Altered Images and Haircut 100, both of whom are interested in doing TV shows similar to either the Partridge Family or the Monkees. The Punks have almost no interest in doing video either, or in devising elaborate costumes or stage sets. Their interests begin and end with the music.

All of the Punks are accomplished musicians devoted to expanding the limits of pop to the most extreme areas of music theory imaginable without losing their audience. That's a tall order but the Punks are in a better position than most to pull it off. Their manager/producer Steve Savage runs his own music school and all of the band are good enough with their instruments to teach at it, and Bonnie Hayes has written her own book about music theory (**Rhythm: Notation and Analysis**). The proof of their success is in their music and its acceptance.

It's frustrating to know how good these people are and not to be able to prove it to anybody. The Punks haven't played outside of California yet and although they are signed to Slash with distribution by Warners, their album isn't due for a month or so. It's quite likely that no one in Toronto besides myself and Peter Noble have ever heard the band, and that includes the people at Warners here. If there was one song I'd want to single out as an introduction, say if SHADES could afford to include a flexi disc, it would be *Shelly's Boyfriend*. That song, released as an independent single, became immensely popular in San Francisco not only because of its immaculate pop sound and irresistible melody but because of its message, which Hayes summed up once as "choosing not to have a boyfriend, at least for long enough to develop a brain."

I talked to the Punks in their dressingroom at the Stone club in SF, a corporate rock club whose door I swore I'd never darken again. The Punks made me break that promise. The Punks are: Bonnie Hayes (vocals, keyboards, songs), Kevin Hayes (drums), Paul Davis (drums) and Hank Maninger (bass). We had a time factor problem due to the band's tight schedule for the day so I asked Bonnie Hayes to do a quick Punks history lesson at the start:

Bonnie Hayes: The first version of the Punks got together in 1979, it was together for a year and included: Steve Savage, who's now our manager, was playing the drums, my brother Christopher, who's now with Huey Lewis and the News, on guitar, and a bassplayer named Mark Pollard, who had been a graphic artist but we turned him into a bassplayer expressly for our own vile purposes (laughter). Chris left the band after six months, we had another keyboard player, Dave Merril, who's now with Peter Miller and the Wildcats. (Softly) I'm giving all these plugs. And he left after a couple of months, we did power trio for a while and then we got Charles Hornaday.

Shades: (triumphantly, having finally recognized a name) *Baby Buddha!*

Bonnie: Baby Buddha, he's a Baby Buddha man! And then we broke up because we were just really tired of the scene. It was really awful, we weren't making any money and we weren't having any fun playing the tunes, we weren't writing a lot of tunes, the tunes that I was writing the band couldn't play because the bassplayer wasn't experienced and we were really limited by that.

Shades: *You had been playing expressly in SF?*

Bonnie: We were playing SF and sort of beaming off into the outlying areas.

Kevin Hayes: You guys went down to Los Angeles a couple of times, right?

Bonnie: Yeah, we went to LA twice (laughs). One of them was just the most horrendous experience. We went down for one gig at the Hong Kong Cafe on a Wednesday night with this band called the Plugz who were at the time really popular, we were opening for them and they were late because they were driving from Texas that night. They were an hour and a half late for the gig so the management of the club asked us to play two sets instead of one set — in the middle of our set. And suddenly the equipment broke down, the PA broke down in the middle of the set, so that was a little break. We went home totally broke and having lost a bunch of money on this gig (laughs). Everybody was really mean to us and we were sad!

Shades: *LA must have really turned around for you.*

Bonnie: I don't know, we haven't been there since this band got together (resumes the history). We actually had about ten months where we didn't have a band, where Savage and I were writing and making tapes. I decided that I didn't want to put another band together, I just wanted to write songs. And then, of course, we got a band together (laughs). Makes perfect sense.

Shades: *If you didn't go back to LA how did the Slash deal happen?*

Bonnie: They got the single. Steve is great at this stuff and he said ok, I'll send a single to every record company in the world! So he did a 500 single mailing and Slash got one and came up to see us at

vocals. That's the problem, I think, with every band that records. When you're in the studio you have the time to put down back-up vocals. Some bands are of the opinion then that you shouldn't record vocals that you can't do live, but I think the recording situation is one where you're supposed to use these things to the limit and you then use the live situation to its limit. We try to use live shows for incendiary rave-up wildness rather than perfect crystalline sound like the single. We want to have as much fun as the audience is having but we won't if we stand there and concentrate on our back-up vocals.

Kevin: It's getting better though. Part of that is that the three of us, who have sung minimally before, have at least started to get to the point where we can consider ourselves singers.

Shades: *How did the three of you get into the band?*

Kevin: I was around.

Bonnie: He's my brother.

Shades: *Ah, yes, you were certainly underfoot then.*

Kevin: I'd been in bands with her earlier and I've been playing around the scene.

Bonnie: He's 22 but he's like a little prodigy, he's been a pro for eight years.

Kevin: I didn't go to college, dropped out of high school and saved a lot of time.

Hank Maninger: I was playing in all these nowhere bands and finally I just quit all of them. I started going to the city all the time and asking everybody around if any of the bands needed a bass player. I

## THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF:



f. Stop Fitzgerald

## THE PUNKS

the I-Beam and immediately started negotiating, courting us.

Shades: *One of the things I liked about Shelly's Boyfriend is that it has a real pop sound but there is some intelligence apparent there.*

Bonnie: Thank you. It's really nice to have someone notice that, I guess most of the time people don't even think about it. It doesn't seem like people care that much about intelligence in the pop world.

Shades: *It's certainly not a required factor.*

Bonnie: In fact, it seems to be detrimental, people seem to shy away from it.

Shades: *I hear all the time that XTC are too clever, they'd be millionaires if they'd write simpler material.* Paul Davis: Every once in a while a song breaks through that's a little bit hipper or has something insightful to say in the lyrics.

Bonnie: But it's usually got to be couched in real stupid terms, I mean in a way that's what *Shelly's Boyfriend* is. If you listen to it carefully you can hear that it's intelligent but if you don't you could think it was stupid. It's basic sounding.

Kevin: The drum beat is pretty simple. I get bored playing it.

Shades: *Well, drummers are easily bored.*

Kevin: I just take a lot of drugs and forget about it (laughter).

Shades: *One of the comments I've heard about you repeatedly is that you weren't as good live as you were on your tapes and on your single.*

Bonnie: Who said that? (laughs) Well, that's commonly thought. Mostly it has to do with the fact that we don't have five of me singing back-up

was at the Mab (club) and *Shelly's Boyfriend* was being played on the system because the demo was already out and Ramona (of Elements Of Style) said this is the Punks new song, I really like it and oh, I hear their bass player quit! So I checked it out.

Paul Davis: They found me, I was playing in a club with Merle Saunders and Bonnie and Kevin came down and sat in a couple of times.

Bonnie: Me and Kevin used to play in a band with Merle's son Tony. Merle's a jazz fusion player who's toured nationally.

Paul: I was invited over to Kevin's place to jam a bit and then Bonnie asked me to come over one night and play on a demo tape. I did the guitar on *Shelly's Boyfriend* and a couple of others. It sounded good and here I am.

Shades: *Ok. (To Bonnie) Kevin was saying there were bands before the Punks?*

Bonnie: Before we got the Punks together I'd been playing covers in a completely putrid, revolting top 40 style band. The only reason I did it is that you make 350\$ a week. All you have to do is put on a pretty dress, man, and go out and play these idiot songs. It got really boring, I was in a band with three women and two men and the whole problem was that one of the guys wrote original material and was using the band to get attention. He kept telling us we were going to get signed and in the meantime we'd be playing covers in Monterey on the beef and bar circuit. Finally it was just too awful and I quit and decided to put the Punks together.

Shades: *Is it partly that experience that accounts for the impression I get that you don't take too much shit from anybody? (laughter)*

Bonnie: (in mock reflection) I don't know why that is. I guess it is from being in bands for a lot of years and taking shit from so many jerks. In that band I'd have to sit there and all these bozos would come up and try to buy me drinks and the guys in the band were assholes because they thought girls were stupid.

Kevin: Especially since you're a musician, that really puts guys off. She can play her ass off, that's the problem!

Bonnie: Yeah. Other musicians would see if they could scare me in musical playing situations. I had to learn not to be shaken by what anybody said or showed me or did.

Shades: *How do you think you're going to handle the possibility of becoming a big success?*

Bonnie: Boy, I don't know. I'm pretty uncomfortable with the idea actually. I have a lot of mistrust of that whole rock star thing.

Paul: The public is so fickle.

Bonnie: Well, not only that but what they do to you!

Hank: The problem a lot of people have, especially if it happens real fast, is that you get all the insecure feelings about why it is that I'm in this place, I'm not that good! And then you start to booze it up or get into the hard shit because you can't deal with it.

Bonnie: I already feel a lot of weird pressure just from being successful enough to headline shows around here. It's moving real fast and it gets uncomfortable. We're just gonna see what happens, but if it's not fun we're gonna quit. We all signed a paper.

Hank: (laughing) Not only quit, we'll kill ourselves. We tend to overreact.

Paul: It's a natural progression though. If you start getting in that position what are you gonna do, sit at home? You don't want to be recognized as a good band?

Bonnie: I really want to be recognized as a good band. What I don't want is to be abused, you know?

(Steve Savage enters and says it's time for the band to have dinner)

Shades: *Ok. Anybody else have anything they want to say to people in Canada?*

Assorted voices: Oh, yes we want to come to Canada very much! We love Canada! Eh? Eh? Eh? (laughter)

A few hours later, near the end of an evening which I have to admit to having only a foggy recollection of, the Punks played at the Stone in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd.

There's no doubt that the Punks major drawback is that they are not a great live band. Not that they are bad, their musicianship is too far reaching for that and both Maninger and Bonnie Hayes are outgoing performers. But you are left with a feeling that they could do better. The basic problem is not so much the vocals, as the band believes, but the fact that Bonnie Hayes' keyboard playing prevents her from giving her whole attention to communicating with the audience. When she comes out from behind them and sings, as she does on one or two numbers, she's able to establish eye contact and be a front person. She needs to be in front for the live show to really work. It's a problem that won't be easily resolved, as I suspect Bonnie gets as much fun out of playing keyboards on her own compositions as she does singing them.

The problems that night were magnified horribly by a bad monitor and by a consistent defect in Paul's guitar amp that caused it to work only intermittently. There were times that, for all the sound he could coax out of his guitar, he might as well have been strumming a tennis racquet. Still, it's obvious that the Punks are a band with the potential to be hugely successful. Slash seems to think they will outsell their popular label mates the Blasters, and that Bonnie will replace Exene of X (who are now on Elektra) as the label's main female star. What's probably more important is that the Punks, by insinuating deliberately elaborate chord changes into what appear to be simple pop songs, are working at changing the much abused formulas of pop music. And having fun, while still caring for the art in what they do.

As evidence for that caring, I can offer this: a few nights after that show Hank Maninger spotted me at a Contractions show, came up to me and apologized that I had seen such a weak performance, especially in light of our conversation about their live weaknesses. He seemed to feel that it was a lot worse than it had truly been, because the band had been well received. Not many musicians would still be concerned about a bad show almost a week later, fewer still would feel they had to apologize for it. He told me they had another show coming up a couple of nights later in Berkeley and that he'd make sure I got in to see it, that it would be a better gig. I thanked him, without having the heart to tell him I'd already be at home in Toronto. It doesn't matter, the Punks will be around for a while. We'll all have our chance to hear them.

Note: This is what happens when you get behind. The Punks are no longer the Punks as of a month or so ago. They are now known as Bonnie Hayes with the Wild Combo. Their album, called **Good Clean Fun**, is out in the U.S.A. and is available here as an import.



This is an interview I'm of two minds about. That in itself is not very unusual — nor are most of the reasons I find myself, long after this conversation, still dubious. It is, on the whole, an attitude I recommend, and a primary purpose in doing an interview anyway.

It isn't Brett Wickens himself who made me (or probably found me) that way. It isn't his "story", which has a parabola-status, Portrait of the Young Emigré Artist in London. As seen on a Brief Return Visit. The fact that he is what he is, doing what he is doing both well and "successfully" — no, that's not the problem. Nor is it the nature of certain intractable truths; like Making It elsewhere when there's nothing here, though that may be the source of a stubborn resistance. Maybe I just plain don't want to believe that. Or maybe I don't think that Burlington's "here", which betrays the limits of my perspective and patience, I guess. I don't think Mississauga is, either (or Moose Jaw or Killaloe or Queen Street West between Peter and Bathurst). I keep thinking there has to be something else; more. That's right under our noses.

And in fact (getting back to the subject) I left some things out while transcribing a long, rambling chat. Some "political" comments on Thatcher, the Falklands, the state of economies; some trashing of former associates. Taken in balance, these didn't seem crucial, informed or enlightening. In fact and on both sides they seemed, well, naive. Unconstructive. And naturally, we're both entitled — I don't think the rest of the world really needs it.

What's left is much more than bare bones to an affable, Cinderella-type tale that I hope you will find of some interest, instructive, a small inspiration — and if it leaves you with questions unanswered no doubt they weren't asked and I don't mind that either. Unlike virtue, a skeptic's self-doubt may be its own reward. You should probably always read interviews that way...

Shades: Basically, we just want to hear the story, right? How did a nice boy from Burlington, who originally played with the Spoons, then recorded with Ceramic Hello, end up working in England with — probably — the most exciting designer?

Brett: Luck. Actually, it was coincidence. What happened was I left the Ontario College of Art after staying there for four months of the first year. I got very pissed off with it because everyone was attending the College more for the concept of going to art college. It just wasn't serious enough for me, so I got disillusioned and left and there wasn't really anywhere else to go to study design. So I messed around with Ceramic Hello and Mannequin Records.

Shades: Which is not to say that those are messy projects.

Brett: No, they're not messy at all. But they were more a hobby than anything. I mean, there's nothing serious about Ceramic Hello. It was just sort of an enjoyable experience and something that you could do with a limited involvement from other people, which was good because we found that with Mannequin Records, trying to deal with outside people, you came across a lot of irresponsible figures who didn't want to know about anything independent. So we had to just find a few people that we could trust and then get to work on it, on setting up the record label and going ahead with Ceramic Hello and now with Kinetic Ideals. In January of last year, 1981, I decided that there wasn't anything in Canada for me; I mean, plodding along with Mannequin was fine but you couldn't live from it and I didn't want to succumb to working in a car wash or something — it was just too much, I get bored too easily. So I set up going to England in April. And I knew of Peter Saville. I'd sent him a letter, saying that I just wanted to meet him. That was it; I mean, I admired his work a lot and I was just curious as to what he was like and how he did things. I thought it would be invaluable for me to go and just talk to him. And the day I arrived at DinDisc he was 8 hours late for my meeting with him. I'd come that far and I wasn't — — eventually, he showed up, and his assistant at that time was Martin Atkins, who a few days previously to that had left and set up his own studio, and Peter was looking for a new assistant. So I could not believe it, 'cause the first day I met him he said to me, "Well, can I hire you as my assistant?" I'd shown him, I had an incredibly brief portfolio of work that I'd done, but the main thing that was important was that I'd experienced working on my own, things with the Spoons in the early days, with Kinetic Ideals, lots of Mannequin Records things. Peter was quite interested in that because his first days were spent in independent records, too; in the very early days of Factory (Records). So there was this sort of parallel course. Peter finished Polytechnic in Manchester, he got a Bachelor of Arts in graphic design. In Canada you can't get a degree in graphic design, you can get a diploma that says, yes, you've been in attendance. The Polytechnic system's quite different. It's much more geared to channeling the kid's energy into positive areas, whereas in Canada they're sort of like breeding grounds for apathy. You just sort of

go there because it's the next step after school without having to get a job. I mean, that might seem a bit harsh, but all the people I know, the vast majority of them are doing it just for that reason; whereas in England people are going to school and you meet students at, like, St. Martin's School of Art or the London College of Printing and they're all incredibly interested, their whole life is immersed into what they're doing, you know? It's not just, well we go there 9 to 5 and go out partying at night. Luckily, being hired as Peter's assistant has taught me the technical things I needed to know. Shades: You're "at school". Not in a classroom.

Brett: Right, exactly.

Shades: But you're learning to ask the right questions, instead of a set of routines.

Brett: Yes, most people learn imitations.

Shades: So how do you actually work with Peter? Is there an allocation of roles?

Brett: It's changed now. The way it started was Peter would come up with all the ideas — he'd say; right, well the feeling for this is going to be French cinema posters of the 1930's or German book jackets of the 1910's, something like that, and then it would be my job to go out and I'd have to look in bookshops and libraries and research it, come up with the sort of actual physical way that those things looked at the time, translate that into the modern situation, and then Peter would do the typography. He'd work out the type and the typefaces and order typesetting and then we'd sit down together with these 12" squares, look at all the bits and say, right well this will meet here, we'll move this and enlarge this little bit and get it so that it looks visually pleasing. Mostly my job was to paste it all up and do the mark-up for it and then be the liaison between Peter and the printer. It's not just a case of him finding a book and putting it in front of

and Piet Zward among the Constructivists — were totally concerned with minimalism because they were so good at what they did that could just decide the type and that's it. The shape of the serifs on the letters and the actual construction of the letters said enough about the record sleeve without having to have a 4-colour picture of the band on it as well — said enough about the music. These days, I prefer minimalism in a Bauhaus sense: strength of direction and line.

Shades: We're not going to get back into Form and Function again! But if we bring up the Constructivists, which automatically resonates as the (brief) Russian revolutionary orientation and usage, then we can't avoid a political context.

Brett: Yeah, well some of the bands that we deal with are heavily into politics, in a roundabout sort of way; especially Joy Division and now New Order. In a very discreet way, they're obsessed with Nazi imagery. (Laughing) They're not Nazis, but they think that the whole visual sense of the Third Reich was incredible — they get a buzz off of it. They enjoy the whole idea of marching in squares, and huge red flags and black symbols and torches and things.

Shades: Well, leaping from Commie to Fascist — and aestheticizing all this; come on, these are real...

Brett: (Laughing again) Well we haven't done anything, though, that you could look at and say, right, that's a Nazi sleeve or, you know, they're canonizing the ground that the Fascists walked on. Shades: A nasty sleeve.

Brett: We try not to involve ourselves too much in that because we don't agree with the Nazis or the Fascists or any of the dictatorships that were around.

Shades: Were? Still are!

Brett: Well, yeah. Not to as great an extent now.

## STICKY WICKENS



Robin Roddey

me and saying; right, we're going to copy this. This is why when we do sleeves they more than often take well longer than the due date we're given; it's important for Peter not to have his name on something that's not absolutely perfect in all the details. We don't just throw them out and say well, that one's done.

Shades: What seems characteristic of Peter's and your work is that it's often a matter of 3 lines, perfectly placed. And no more.

Brett: I remember Peter saying to me in the very early days that the job of a graphic designer was to communicate an idea in the simplest terms. And if that meant putting a piece of type in the right size in the right place on a sleeve, then that's all you do and you wouldn't do any more. I mean, there's no use complicating it with, like, extra lines, or extra words, or unnecessary credits.

Shades: Do you actually think or talk to one another in terms like Minimalism; or purity?

Brett: No, we don't, actually. People might think that we're over-minimal and that we consciously create minimal packaging. It's not the case at all. I mean, we've done some very complex packaging, like Ultravox's *Rage in Eden*. That wasn't minimal by any stretch of the imagination. The idea is to take whatever particular job it is and then apply thinking to it. There's no point in, before you even get the job, saying right, well the next thing is going to be minimal. It's not that; it's working out a solution to each problem.

Shades: Do you have favorites personally, though: favorite categories? The ones that I recognize are the most spare. And bold.

Brett: They are. Both of us have learned our typographic "skills", in quotation marks, from a guy named Jan Chishold (?)...the people that we admire the most in historical terms — like Jan Chishold

Shades: But my question is how actively can you dissociate.

Brett: You have to keep a very open mind. It's very important in the job we do.

Shades: And how can you stimulate that in an audience? Those images — symbols — were used to close minds and impose a "solution".

Brett: Ah, that's more difficult — even now, because people are looking at the things we're doing and starting to wonder what direction we're taking. The classical thing that Peter revived, with *Closer* and *Love Will Tear Us Apart* and *Vienna*; people got very much into that and they're still into it now. There's still a half dozen bands a week in England putting out classical sleeves and ripping this and that off. And then we suddenly come out with *Architecture and Morality*, which was like a package of English Bauhaus modern movement thing, with sans-serif type, and it threw everybody. They got really scared; they thought, well we have to keep up with this but we don't want to really leave classicism because we see classicism coming into our daily lives now. Because advertising in England has now taken this classicism slant.

Shades: Something that started to come up a little bit earlier: how do you feel, as someone with drive and ambition, about at this point becoming a cultural import? About living that cliché, or archetype, of how someone makes it in Canada?

Brett: Um, as an import it's quite good because I'm sufficiently now disassociated from Canadian ways that I can come back and take it all in without being too much a part of it.

Shades: Is there such a thing as "Canadian ways"?

Brett: Yeah, boredom is a good Canadian way. Boredom leads to abuse, I decided yesterday, after

getting harrassed by construction workers for being a punk rocker. In Burlington. See, in England, ambition runs quite high, in youth; in English youth. Even though there's a lot of unemployment...you can define ambition in a couple of ways. One is the sort of capitalist ambition, like, you know, wanting to get a job and things. Or you can define it as forming yourselves into groups and stalking the streets and overturning cars. I mean, that's the sort of energy. There was lots of trouble last summer with the riots. Now, I didn't think they were right, because that kind of thing leads to a considerable breakdown of society and it did last year; it was really bad — I mean, people were very frightened to go outside. But you have to respect the fact that there is that energy there. The air is very electric in London. You step out on the streets of Toronto or Burlington today, there's just this sort of calmness and complacency in the air; and there doesn't seem to be a lot of movement or drive or willingness to start anything new or innovative. If you look at everything in the arts, the music scene, what guys wear on the streets; everything — it's just this very bland atmosphere. It's just boring. Everything's just the same. 90 out of 100 guys are wearing jeans and a sweatshirt and baseball cap, workboots, and they go to work 9 to 5 and they drink in the evening. And their life revolves around that. They don't have a direct interest and I know this, because a lot of my relatives here, my cousins and friends and things, live that kind of life. They're just quite content to not move ahead in any way.

Shades: It's a "standard of living" that does require maintenance. Whereas the shit's on the fan, and has been for quite awhile now, in most other places. But it's one thing to say that there's energy. That word links up with crisis. What for? What about?

Brett: In a way, it's a revolution.

Shades: Another word we shouldn't use very loosely. The last time it seemed to mean it was all in your head — or something you ate.

Brett: Well you know, 200 skinheads running down Moss Side in Manchester, throwing over cars, to me is a revolution. Battling with the police.

Shades: Two hundred? Defined by that very stylized limitation? I thought revolutions involved a majority.

Brett: But if you take all those centres in England last year that had riots at the same time and add up all the people...what they were trying to do was to change the shitty system that had been left to them. Now, you can ask whether it had been left to them or whether they had brought it on themselves. But there was just no hope, there were just no jobs.

Shades: But they didn't change much — in fact it's retrenched and set sail, unemployment is still over 3,000,000 now. And my real question is: that's old news. What we saw and heard from the punks — "no future for me" — did become something like, though not really at all, a general social expression some 4 years later. What's now: what's next? What are we hearing, or not hearing these days that's bound to become a significant form of intercourse?

Brett: Fun. Fun and rebuilding are on the cards now. It's quite recent.

Shades: Dance, dance, dance? Let somebody else take care of "the problems"?

Brett: Well, groups like Haircut 100, who have 4 top 10 singles in the last 3 months. Kids are starting to once again, after the sort of Child of Doom stage they went through about two years ago and a year ago. (we have to turn over the tape)...

Shades: This is not really new yet. How much is this fun, fun, fun an historical parallel to, say, what happened during the last big Depression, with dance marathons and spectacular musicals, all that kind of escapist sensationalism and blah blah. To what extent is it either a reaction to or a progression from punk and post-punk doom and gloom and its situationalism?

Brett: It's definitely a progression from as well as being a parallel to the political status of England at the moment. The riots brought everything to a head and then before Christmas you get fun, funky, dance pop bands coming to the surface again, and electropop but not doom laden, singing happy love songs as opposed to Love Will Tear Us Apart type songs. There just seems to be this much more positive push towards, well, "let's stop complaining about what we haven't got", and setting ourselves up in a position to obtain the things we want.

The trouble is, along with the fun music is the new self-indulgence that the bands are getting involved in these days. I mean, a year to 2 years ago, bands would be quite content to come to you with some interesting music and say; right, you know how to do sleeves, do us a sleeve, we're into our music. And it will be a great package because the people that do the music do the music, and the people that understand the artwork do the artwork. The right people coming together to form a very solid package.

Shades: It wasn't like putting yourself in the hands of a market analysis.

Brett: Oh no. Actually choosing. Being very aware of what was going on. Now, when you've got 15 minute wonders like The Human League, who are putting out pop music and wanting their image on everything, and wanting as much money as they can, possibly have, the sudden lack of control

continued, over



you've got over the sleeve emerges. Bands insist on having photos of themselves sort of jumping up in the air on the cover and that.

**Shades:** You mean they want to look like their videos?

**Brett:** They want to look like they're popstars; they want to look like the Walker Brothers on the front of their sleeves, or something. And this is getting very difficult to work with 'cause now we've cut our bands down. I mean we deal with, say, Ultravox, New Order, Orchestral Manoeuvres; the bands that just trust us to take in what is going to be the next big thing and translate that on to a sleeve — like, to actually figure out what is going to be popular in the kids' eyes, or what we can make kids think is popular in the next few months.

**Shades:** Are you still very restricted in terms of industry categories?

**Brett:** Oh yes, very much so. We've been fortunate to be able to make enough money doing record sleeves for bands we like and not having to go out and look around for bands or do every heavy metal band or whatever. You've got to find a band that's going to appreciate your ideas. Otherwise, you know, what's the point?

**Shades:** I have a correspondent who's been writing to me about new mysticisms; his slogan for it is, "on to '60 again". Is that what you mean by succumbing to self-indulgence? And do you see it splitting right down the line again, and increasing marginalization of what's innovative? Right back to where we broke out of — do you get that feeling?

**Brett:** Yes. Because the things in the late '60's, early '70's, are suddenly reemerging because record sales are increasing and bands are seeing more money, and they seem to equate their freedom for self-indulgence with the amount of money they make; like The Human League. The first 2 albums The Human League put out had very discreet pictures of the band on the back. They made no money off of them. Suddenly they rip off Vogue, do a cover with their faces on it, and they make the second biggest selling single since Mull of Kintyre. They see huge amounts of money and think "it's our faces that did it!" And all these other bands see the same thing and go "well, yeah yeah. Lots of makeup and, you know, the odd clothing," which isn't really odd anymore — different clothing and they can sell huge amounts of records. So you get bands coming to you, 17-year olds come to you saying, we're going to wear makeup and these clothes and we want our pictures on the front. So what do you have to work with? There's the sleeve right there; they don't need us. Most cases, they want the name: they want Peter Saville to be on the back of their sleeve. Recently we've done sleeves under many, many pseudonyms — Stil von Dusseldorf, Design Research Institut, Zincografica Spa, Grafica Industria, League of Artists, Dessins Controlee, and I've used Brel Wik, Peter's used a couple, and we put matrix numbers. We did a sleeve recently where the credit was Designatore: Brel Wik-

Graphica Industria, G38. And I mean, the management of the company came down and said, "well, but where's Peter name?!" There were 800-word credits on the back anyway, so our credit didn't seem to matter too much. Still, it was, "where's Peter's name?" So we said: "Grafica Industria — that's Peter."

**Shades:** It must seem like a joke to you, working with companies that think that an image means just personality and names are what's bankable. There does not seem to be all that much of a middle range which would be more flexible than extremes of the big budget, big promo push and the marginal indies with bad distribution and cash flow. That's especially true here in Canada, but you seem to keep up your ties with Mannequin Records.

**Brett:** Well I like — I'm a capitalist at heart, I have to admit that, and I like the competitive spirit that's associated with Mannequin. It was a hobby when we put out the first Spoons single, and even to this first Kinetic Ideals single. But we now actually see that there's an acceptance for it in the marketplace, and no one that's involved with it is concerned with making a lot of money at the moment; they're more concerned with the quality of it. But, like Factory (Records), quality led to mass profit eventually. When Factory started out, and it still is — it's like a guy's flat; there's no office.

**Shades:** When we talked on the phone the other day, you used an industry term I just have to bring up here: the "territories". Which refers to everything outside of England. At first, I thought that meant us...

**Brett:** Yes; it's always approached with some dread when you talk of The Territories because it instantly means your artwork going out and being changed around all over the place. You've spent 15 hours letter-spacing a piece of type, putting it on a sleeve, only to find that they've taken it off and replaced it with some type they had set in 5 minutes. It's criminal in a way. Actually, Canada's one of the best; surprisingly. They've left things alone. When they put on their corporate stuff, they line it up with what we do, they don't just stick it anywhere. Polygram here deserve top marks; CBS in the States deserve bottom, for wilfully messing around. Most things we do, we have a reason for doing.

**Shades:** Are you highly paid, by the way?

**Brett:** Equivalent to Canadian standards, I get about \$13,000 a year. Peter makes more than that, obviously. But my rent — three of us share a flat and the rent is over a thousand a month, and after food which is twice as expensive as here, I'm not really highly paid. I can't save any money. I'm paid in relation to the amount of money I have to spend, so I don't know if that's being highly paid or not.

**Shades:** Well I know that you've taken on projects for basic expenses, out of loyalty or some affection you have for a band. Making whole lots of money does not seem to be the bottom line for how either or both of you work.

**Brett:** Oh no. We're content to just do visually pleasing packages. Right now we're starting to shift from record sleeves into corporate packaging. We're doing a tin for a soda manufacturer in Italy

and we're doing book jackets for Penguin books. Because of this sort of self-indulgent increase in record sleeves, we don't feel we can work comfortably with a lot of the areas in the music industry, as we once could. So we've started to find other areas and other areas are starting to find us as well. International design companies are starting to approach us to do up-to-date packaging for whatever — chocolate boxes or drink tins — but applying the same thinking we'd apply to a record sleeve. Only we make six times as much money.

**Shades:** Do you think that's symptomatic? That there was a time when music was the leading tip and that's passing again — that it's no longer the best place to do innovative work?

**Brett:** Oh, without a doubt yeah. It's passing at a furious rate. It's not passing in Canada, though. It's passing in England. It'll pass in Canada in 2 years. The Kinetic Ideals sleeve is actually going to make something happen. We don't know what but... I think people will start to pay new attention to their graphics and to have a vision re-present themselves. Whether that will happen in 2 weeks or 2 years, I don't think it can be ignored.

**Shades:** Will we have to have new kinds of bands?

**Brett:** Yes. I mean, turning on the radio here...! Streetheart on one side and Loverboy on the other. And a disc jockey screaming into my ear — a house fire in Ancaster is world-shattering information. There's no casualness to it, it's as if you have to strain to take in everything they're saying, and what they're saying is useless anyway. They're not saying anything — and the music is saying even less than the disc jockeys.

**Shades:** Well the decibel level is higher for advertising. You can't even have a quiet shit in this country; they're yelling at you about what kind of toilet paper you should have when you're through!

**Brett:** You can go to the shop and still hear the ad. I mean, I'm not used to it. It's exciting watching everything in England; the advertising, going to the cinema and seeing ads. Especially for people who are designers, or involved in the arts somehow, you can actually get quite excited about an ad for, you know, K P Peanuts or something. I just saw a TV ad for K P Peanuts with the Lene Lovich song Lucky Number as the soundtrack. The whole ad is a quote, "New Wave" type of kids' party; lots of kids jumping around, sort of sexual innuendos thrown in and they're all singing to Lucky Number except it's about K P Peanuts. But the ad's done really well and to see — there's so much more of a crossover between pop music and mainstream life in England that the two are often indistinguishable. It's just a way of life: **Top of the Pops**, my aunt who's in her mid-forties loves **Top of the Pops**. You get The Exploited on, and the next guy is, like Bryan Ferry and then you get Yazoo and then a heavy metal band.

**Shades:** It's hard to say, maybe wrong to see North American social and cultural organization as cause and effect with its target/analysis marketing methods;

with its atomization of markets and products by age-groups and type, category and so on. But when you start to talk about how exciting it is, this crossover in England; have they in fact got an instant commodification down pat? If so, what happens to individual talent — expression? How can we, or should we, protect the status of an "avant-garde"? How do these questions pose themselves to you at this point?

**Brett:** I think it's good they cross over. I think you have to learn that being avant-garde, or applicable only to a select few, is not always a good thing. I think if you can retain your integrity and still be popular to a mass market, I mean if a mass market comes to you in a way, I think that's wonderful. If you're doing what you want to do and you don't alter it in order to find the mass market...

**Shades:** That gets into mechanics, however; like distribution and access, promotion...

**Brett:** Unfortunately.

**Shades:** But they are facts of life.

**Brett:** It's unfortunate in that something like Mannequin Records has great difficulties in that aspect of it. 'Cause no one is willing to take on a record that, first of all no one outside of Toronto has heard, and second of all doesn't have the name of the band anywhere on the sleeve except on the spine. That's very damaging, or it appears to be very damaging to the record label: distributors just won't touch it. Meanwhile, there's these semi-independents putting out music that's not any different than everything else that gets put out in Canada, or they bring in the godlike mystique of an English producer and don't ask why he hasn't been working in England much lately, and suddenly we've got "Canada's answer to..." — well, what questions did The Human League pose? I mean, when are bands in Canada gonna stand on their own?

**Shades:** Maybe when there are people who don't just buy the import; which is why I asked you how you felt about being one. And maybe what we really do best in Canada is to assimilate things from all over, and the question or standard is whether the process brings forth a production or straight reproduction. That might be a useful distinction and I think the bottom line there would be passion; when you can't not do it and you do have to do it that way. Then fashion's quite out of the case. It could be last year's big thing, or next year's big thing, or no big thing at all. It carries its own — dreaded word — authenticity.

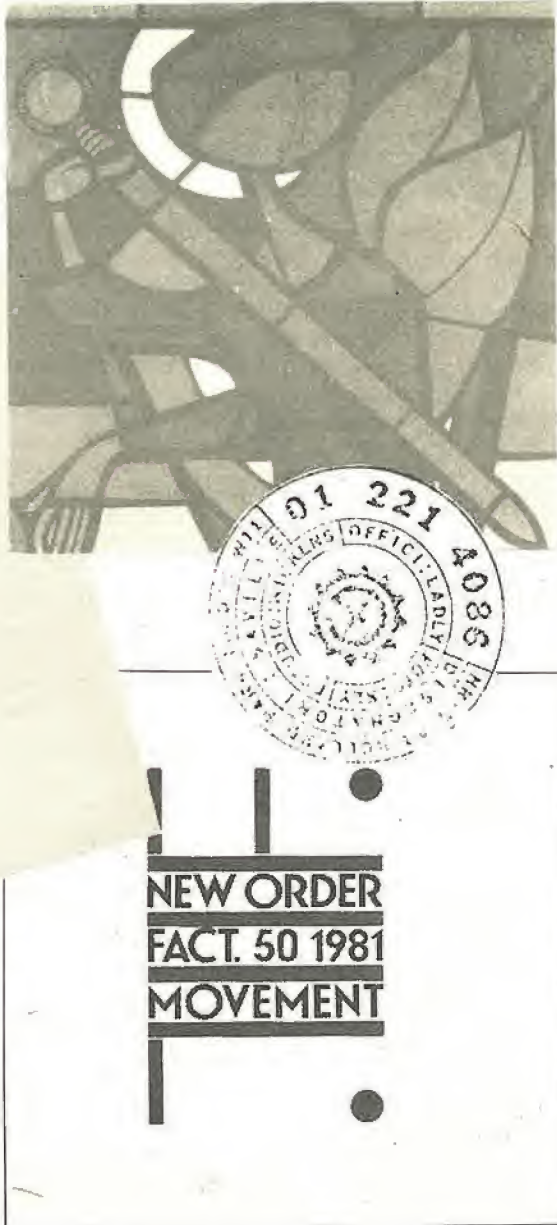
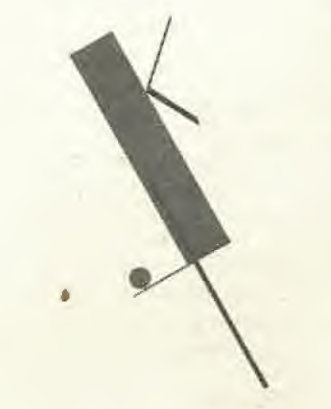
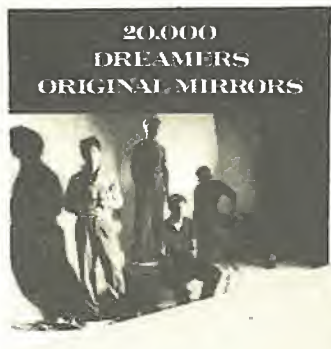
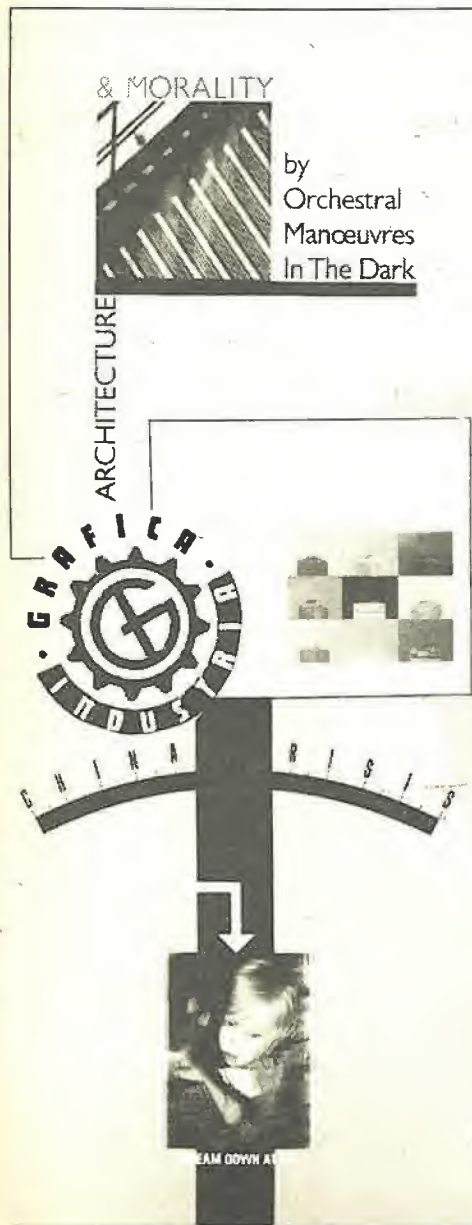
**Brett:** Well as long as it isn't mimicking, posturing; flogging dead horses. I mean, that just depresses me so much.

**Shades:** What have you heard that excited you lately?

**Brett:** Well, having to work right in the thick of it for the last year, something like 12 or 16 hour days, six or seven days a week, I've stayed up all night more times than I can count and your system gets wrecked — you just want to get away and you don't want to know. You want to listen to a classical music session or something; just something ambient where you don't have to be drained or concentrate or anything. Perhaps just getting older — I don't know. Peter's such a perfectionist; he'll insist on spending 10, 12, 15 hours adjusting the spaces between the letters of a band's name so that they're perfectly letter-spaced. I think working last year with Peter's equivalent to 10 years at the Ontario College of Art for learning technical details. I don't feel sufficiently aware yet of the European design community, as to how they're all channelling their energies and to what direction they're taking. So I have to look to Peter to tell me what I should be looking for and then when I find something I like, I'll explore that even further and get on to a sort of chain-sequence of discovering new things.

**Shades:** Sounds like you're having a lot of fun and learning a lot really fast. Do you have words of encouragement for people who do something similar here?

**Brett:** Well, the main thing is not to succumb to adverse influences. If you determine your own ideas, which is the main thing; they should be clear in your mind and not vague, and then to do them — employ them. And more than anything; take risks if necessary. Don't be safe, because being safe is going to lead to complacency and eventual boredom. If you take risks, some of them will pay off, some of them won't. I mean that's how it happened for me. I took the risk of going to England with nothing, I had no money or anything. It could well have happened that I didn't meet Peter, did not get a job, but it wouldn't have put me off; I would have risked myself in some other way, going somewhere else or staying in England and trying to do something else. Just determining your own ideas and your own course of action and then doing it, sort of casting security to the side. I'm not saying that if you're convinced you should go and blow up cars you should do it. There's a common sense standpoint. But if you really want to do something, there's no reason why you can't do it if you just go and try. And I mean, considering the size of the world, there's no reason why you can't find somewhere where you can do what you want to do. You are free to move. You don't have to stay in Etobicoke or wherever. You might be able to do it right where you live now, but you can do it. Just don't become too secure or complacent. Actually, I think





if you could print the address where we're located, we're quite willing to work for new bands wherever they are. There's a new address coming up (which, since the interview, was located as **Grafica Industria, Unit 9, Kensaltown Telegraph Works, Kensal Road, London W 10, U.K.**), but they can always reach us at **83 Holland Park, Flat 5, London W 11**. We try to get round to answering letters; sometimes it takes 6 months or so. If they have any questions or want to know something about a sleeve they're doing, or want us to do a sleeve for them, we're willing to help out people. We don't ever elevate ourselves. We don't want to do that, because as soon as you do, you cut off so many ties, we become a machine or a corporation of no-longer-people. So we're willing to assist people in any way. That's Peter's address anyway: address it to Grafica Industria, then we know it's business mail. If it has British Telephone: Final Notice on the front, then it will get opened pretty quick.

*Shades: Is there anything final you'd like to go down on this tape with?*

Brett: I would like to see a general, in North America, a general increase in the quality of design and that's in everything; from the sub shop signs to record sleeves to chocolate bar packages. You see, in Europe, that's what I found. The design sense is so much more acute. Not everything, but the majority of things are very perfectly set up, are very nice to look at, and especially in the record industry, where I suppose Peter has had a great hand in increasing the quality of the design. I'd like to see that happen here. They need to set themselves up new ways of thinking. I mean, it's standard for the college student to bring out the book of Letraset and find out the latest style or something, which is usually not very nice looking. They can obtain the history here too, you know. They could obtain the reference material; they can find the books which will show them where what they're doing has evolved from. Where type comes from, how the families of different types have evolved; why you have less space between an "a" and an "l" than you do between an "m" and an "n" when you're doing a word. It's all those sort of little details that make something look professional and perfect. That's why you can look at it and say, well I can't find fault with that. Because technically it's perfect — and because the type is technically perfect it's also visually pleasing.

*Shades: Well, the Lowest Common Denominator as the mind-set of marketing and of consumption encourages certain aspects of shoddy design. Also planned obsolescence. Can better designers do much by themselves?*

Brett: Product design is a very big part of it. Here, they've set up the problem themselves because they want to have a new model out; they want people to throw out their old one and buy a new one. So they don't design it well enough that people are going to want to keep it as an object in their home. They just design it well enough so that people aren't going to be too upset about it for the next year. Whereas Sony just had an exhibit at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and an exhibition of all their products, newer things and things coming out next year, and from a design standpoint — absolutely amazing. The designer in Sony is as important as the electronics technician here who makes everything smaller. I mean, you want to own their products. It's like a casual elegance — it's not objet d'art that you want to put on a pedestal but it's just discreetly elegant which will sit somewhere and says enough without saying too much. I find that quite pleasing in Europe, that you can go into a shop and not get too upset about the rubbish that's sitting around on the shelf. Also in England, people can't afford to replace big things every year. So, in a way the consumer has also determined how things have to look. They need to look new enough, and elegant enough that they can be around for a few years: new and permanent at the same time.

*Shades: And the last words you'd like to make famous?*

Brett: I don't know where it's all going. For us, it could be a precarious situation. It could explode and we could find ourselves doing exactly what we have been doing on all sorts of packaging — or we could find out that nobody wants it and then we'll die out. Within our group we all work free-lance, and that's always difficult because any time you might have to go back and start fresh. It can go so many different ways, but I try and encourage the people I meet to not be too secure — to be more obsessed with pursuing what you think is right, what your goals are and where you think you should be. Try not to be suburban. But always better in what you are doing and keep trying to learn. If we make more money that's great; if we don't we're not bothered, because we're not greedy.

*Shades: Making more money means making more work. Helping more people do some more projects, and buy some more time. Aside from that, my theory of money's "enough is enough".*

Brett: Right. When you become greedy your standards drop, I think. Because then you're more interested in the money than in the final goal and how you get there.

by Angie Baldassarre

It started one day a few years back in Beckenham, Kent, (South London), with two teenage girls walking through winding roads in Earl's Park, pondering their emotional and social lives. They have a problem they feel it is time to resolve. They agree on a painful but necessary solution and walk away from each other sombre but decided.

Less than a week later Nick Heyward (young, blonde and beautiful), and Graham Jones (even younger, more blonde and more beautiful), are sitting sulking over bad scotch in disbelief. Ditched, after several years, both of them; let loose, abandoned. What now?

At the same time Les Nemes (not as young nor as blonde nor as beautiful), gets a call from his girlfriend, who's vacationing in Israel.

"Well, Les, I think this is it, really."

Les puts down the receiver. In a daze he walks towards a bar where he finds two acquaintances sitting at a table, still sulking and with scotch all over their faces. "Them too," Les thinks to himself. He joins them.

Suddenly the wondering three had found themselves thrown on the mercy of public and social life, away from the habitual security of their previous existence. What to do? How to get away from — or with — it all?

Thus the band.

With Nick on vocals, Graham on guitars and Les on bass, Haircut 100 was born. A drummer was added, Brian Cunningham, but quickly dismissed to be replaced by Patrick Hunt. A saxophonist was needed and Phil Smith was the man. Percussionist Mark Fox started playing with Haircut 100 on a part-time basis (whenever he could take time off from teaching German) until he joined the band permanently.

The group debuted in the library of an Eton Square "gentleman's club" and following the show were offered studio time by engineer Karl Adams (later to become their manager, then dismissed as such) who helped them cut a demo tape and presented it to record companies. It wasn't long before A&R men were approaching the band offering to pay for rehearsal time so they could catch the band in action. That year they signed to Arista Records.

In September, 1981, Arista UK released the first Haircut 100 single *Favorite Shirts (Boy Meets Girl)*. It earned them a silver disc in England and became a North American rock club hit as an import 12-inch single. Their second single became an even bigger hit, *Love Plus One*, giving way to an interesting debut album.

**Pelican West**, produced by the Beat engineer Bob Sargent, rushed into the niche of the pop exception; a stylish and extravagantly repeatable form that has sold over 300,000 copies in Britain alone.

Haircut 100 recently embarked on a short but important North American tour to promote the album and the new single *Fantastic Day*. It was during their two day stay in Toronto that my first-hand account on the fun-boy-six was made possible. I joined Mark Fox and Graham Jones by the hotel pool on a warm sunny afternoon. Graham looks even younger than his 21 years, comfortable in a yellow bowling shirt and thin grey trousers tucked into his tennis socks. His mannerisms betrayed a good family upbringing; his precise phrases do not indulge in the unnecessary colloquialisms so frequent among English artists. Graham emanated a personal warmth and he was eager to talk in detail about his past and feelings.

Mark Fox, the eldest Haircut at 25, displayed a maturity and understanding apparently coached by several years of university studies. The least boyish and definitely the most strikingly handsome of the six, Mark maintained a calm and polite attitude throughout the interview until I made mention of British band Pig Bag (see below). At this point he picked up a chair, threw it in the pool and emitted a Tarzan-like roar. Except for this burst of emotion his speech throughout was crisp, neat and unambiguous. Dressed in an all-American baseball outfit, Mark Fox took full charge of the interview.

#### About being a rock star teaching high-schools.

M — All the kids who were treating me like a normal teacher who they hated, all of a sudden they were chasing me in the playground for autographs and things. By Christmas I had to leave because it was impossible continuing doing two jobs, because we were making the album and playing concerts in the evening; and during the daytime I was teaching comprehensive school. At the time there was no way I was going to give up a full-time teaching job to become a musician; it's too ephemeral, it's too fleeting and too prone to fashion. But I saw this thing take off in such a way I thought I must be mad to pass this up.

*What attracted you?*

M — I really enjoyed the music and I liked the other people in the band; and it seemed that at 23 years old to actually become a middleclass fat little twit

# UNDER THE HAIRCUT 100



Courtesy, Polygram

that holds chalk in his hand all day and gets shouted at and is hated by teachers and children...I can do without that. I'll wait 'till I'm 40 and become a teacher again.

#### About the British Movement.

M — There is no such thing as a British movement at all. All you are getting is the most accessible and the most immediate of the pop groups being picked-up on by the record companies and the press here; looking over to England, seeing what's happening and just picking the best. There's no real movement. The only similarity between us and Depeche Mode is that we both like each other as people. I mean we see them all the time, and that they have no part in the record industry, they're not really professional musicians. They hate touring, they hate the whole rock'n'roll drug, hippie, heroin type of screwing, the late-night lugging of rock'n'roll that seems so much part of the Los Angeles scene. All the night-club lounge lizards posing in mirrors...they hate all that and that seems to be the similarity with us.

#### About the difficulties of a starting band.

G — We started playing places in London that were a bit better than the normal club circuit. We tried to get into better clubs, we even opened some. That was what the band was about initially. You get picked by the club circuit, you have to when you're a young band. Initially it's the cocktail crowd, the lounge lizard type, the Face-trendos. Ironically, as soon as you start taking off they totally jumped us and you get a totally new crowd. Younger girls and parents. Thankfully, we left the whole discosort of trendy posers, we left those behind pretty quickly and seem to have generated a crowd that's more normal, really. But I bet here (Toronto) we're going to get the trendy ones dressing up.

#### Fashion and "Image".

G — People keep mentioning **Brideshead Revisited** and **Chariots of Fire**. But there really isn't a Haircut 100 image because it changes constantly. M — Within the group of six, there's Graham who likes American bowling shirts; I like ties and suits; Nick likes more of the Irish fisherman's look. Within that group you can still spot different identities, with different variations. It's like our music. You have six different influences all blended in together with our own variations.

#### I quote a piece comparing Haircut 100 to Pig Bag

M — PigBag are the most revolting piece of shit. They are the most talentless, pretentious, immature bunch of wankers this side of Kitchener. I'll tell you why. They believe in that 60's loft music; jazz and Ornette Coleman and trends, sort of Miles Davis going after hours and playing around the circuit. But they're totally talentless musicians. Miles Davis and Ornette Coleman spent 50 years playing straight jazz and experiencing with really conservative frameworks before they could get to that. And they (PigBag) think just because they bought a Miles Davis album or a late John Coltrane album, they think they could make squeaky noises on instruments and they could play modern avant-garde jazz with a tribal rhythm. I don't see that it's necessary to have gone through the whole history of jazz playing clubs, having gone through the entire heroin trip and 15 failed marriages, beaten up in the streets and spending their entire life fighting

before getting to that state.

And PigBag from Bristol, all from public schools and little conservative backgrounds, think they can buy a trumpet and play like Miles Davis.

*Why the comparison with you?*

G — Because it's percussion and brassy. But I think we're as similar to them as we are to Jimi Hendrix. It's because Mark plays percussion he sounds like PigBag; it's like saying because you wear a skirt you're like the GoGos.

#### About the name Haircut 100.

G — Going back to the early days. We were sitting around the coffee table at Nick's house; we just got rid of our first drummer Pat because he was lacking quite a bit up there. So there were three of us left with Mark who was playing whenever he could between teaching, and Philip who was in other bands but sat with us when possible. So there were three of us sitting around this coffee table in Nick's kitchen thinking about all these names. We used to be called Moving England, a terrible name that followed an even worse one, Quick Cereal. Names like Blatant Beavers and Captain Pennyworth were coming up, and Nick said Haircut 100. Everybody was on the floor laughing. We knew right there and then that that was the one.

Later that evening at a barbecue held by entrepreneur brothers Raymond and Ian Perkins, I had a chance to take with Nick Heyward — whose arrogance and trivial attitude further confirmed my suspicions of his immaturity.

"These Canadians are so boring," he says as we lounge on the second-floor patio. "I guess that it reflects the company," I answer. "Yeah, I guess," he answers, not sensing the sarcasm. He picks up some earth from a flower pot and is about to throw it on the people dining on the patio below us. I stop him.

"Why?" he asks. "Because it's not polite," I say, "considering people are still eating."

"Aw, who cares?" I smile and try to convince him that the plant would prefer to have the earth back. Ignoring me, he throws it over the edge and straight onto someone's steak. Uh huh and ho-hum.

The following evening, Haircut 100 played to a sold-out crowd at the Concert Hall, in intense heat and the hysteria generated by hundreds of teenage girls. A few times during the evening a young female body would venture on stage and kiss any one she could. A crowd pleaser, Haircut 100 were technically faultless as they twice performed *Favorite Shirts - Boy Meets Girl*. A cheeky combination of competence and spirit, the band looked neat in their jumpers and towels. The girls all clamoured to kiss grinning Nick, while Mark (percussion) and Phil (sax) seem to do most of the donkey work, even though most of the set really amounts to just one long song. I'm not complaining: it was a light-headed, good celebration of a song...but where was it going (if anywhere)?

Back in Britain, Haircut 100 are planning their own television series. "It will be like the Monkees — us turning up in your own home," says Nick. Maybe so. But given the way I'd seen him in somebody else's, I'm not sure I want him in mine — even with the protection and distance the magic of video boxes affords.



by Norm Ibuki

In the early '60s, Scarborough was the scene of an unlikely musical happening. Out of the dark, cobwebbed recesses of a garage emerged a group of punks whose music would have made Hans Christian Andersen roll over in his grave.

They were called the Ugly Ducklings. Just five guys who came out of Cedarbrae and West Hill Collegiate who, in 1965, walked into a Village coffee house called Charlie Brown's Place and offered to play for nothing.

They almost made it big in a time when the Beatles were still king. They had two local hits when there were no Canadian content regulations. They opened for the Rolling Stones and played with such notables as Jimi Hendrix and Wilson Pickett—enough laurels to stuff under most caps.

In 1967, the Ducks' record label, Yorkville, made the mistake of sending lead singer David Byngham down to New York city to record the Ducks' biggest hit, *Gaslight*, with the NBC orchestra backing him. The success of the tune cemented their stature as Canada's number one garage band. But by this time management and production problems had prompted lead guitarist Roger Mayne to leave the band. A month later he was followed by rhythm guitarist Glynn Bell. The band fell apart at the peak of its success.

Twelve years later, Mayne was in Bleeker Bob's, a New York city record store. There he learned from Bob himself that there was still keen interest in the Ducks. Surprised by this revelation, Mayne called the old band together and they recorded their second album, *Off the Wall*. Having gone underground soon after that reunion, the Ducks are back again. And with the momentum of a third album behind them, the Ugly Ducklings are hitting the clubs and maybe this time they'll make it to New York city to play.

An older and somewhat wiser Roger Mayne now sits behind the president's desk at CineService Limited. He says most of the band is married and each has his own career. David Byngham is a mechanic. Robin Boers (drums) teaches drum-

ming and does session work. Glynn Bell has his own graphic arts business (he designed the cover for their new album) and John Read (bass) is a manager for Black's Camera.

For those who remember the Ducks, check your record collections for their first album, *Some-where Outside*. It's worth mega bucks to any record collector. For those of us who will be satisfied with less, the Ducks' new release, *The Ugly Ducklings*, is a good collection of their old material which also includes some unreleased material.

Surprisingly, the tunes don't sound that dated. And it's highly recommended to anyone who's into the Fleshtones or Blasters.

This interview takes place in the president's office at the CineService head office here in Toronto.

*Why re-release your old material instead of new material?*

"When I (Roger Mayne) wanted to get the band together before, I knew there was some interest out there, but we couldn't find a record company who was serious about taking our album (*Off the Wall*) as a product — which doesn't surprise me. I've never marveled at their brains, enough said.

"This album is just a thought Ahead corporation had and put out to see what they can do with it. It's done OK for them, it's served their purpose. That was not my decision. All I did was make sure things like song selection were done right."

*Why wasn't *Some-where Outside* re-released?*

"I didn't feel *Some-where Outside* should have been re-released because it's a collector's item. On this collection there are some tunes that weren't previously released (*I Wish You Would, I Need Your Love, My Little Red Book*) that I felt captured the same kind of feeling of the era and the band."

*How well is the album doing?*

"It's doing well in the Beaches and the people who ordered the album are re-ordering. The main problem is that radio stations are treating the album as a greatest hits package and not as a new album. But I guess you can't expect tunes recorded

that long ago to get a lot of air play."

*The album *Off the Wall* sold about 5,000 copies on the Razor label (part of CineService); about half were sold in the States. The band only played for a few gigs in 1980, then each went on their separate ways.*

*Will this third "reunion" of the Ducks be of a more permanent nature?*

"Well it depends. We came away the last time with a bad taste in our mouths. We were really down on ourselves. Again, we shouldn't listen to the media.

"Our timing was wrong, too. If we had waited a little longer we probably would have been better off. There also wasn't our kind of place to play in. The Edge was there and there was the Mocambo; after playing them three or four times what can you do? Play the Gasworks? Playing those type of places doesn't do anything for us, you get bored with it.

"We could have kept playing through that period but I don't think that would have changed anything. There just wasn't the interest there. At least we didn't see it. The only time that it came around again was when these people wanted to put out our old stuff again. That's where we stand now."

*In retrospect, why didn't the Ducks ever make it really big?*

"A lot of things could have happened. As far as success goes, we were pretty successful in Canada. The reason why we never broke is beyond me sometimes. I guess it was bad timing. We had chances to go to Los Angeles and sign with Capitol records. I could go on forever with chances missed."

For those who are not familiar with the garage band type of music, either by choice, or not, it's a form whose strengths lay in the defiant spirit which it attempts to communicate rather than deft execution. Indeed, many of these bands were just awful, surviving because their British r&b contemporaries like the Stones, Them, Manfred Mann and a whole slew of others made the American garage band sound a commercially viable product. Yes, the same blues and soul artists influenced both

movements but there was a world of difference in each interpretation.

*Have you ever tried to live down your "garage band" label?*

"The Ducks will always be a street band, we're nothing fancy. Anybody can pick up a guitar and play our material which is good. I think that's the key right there; that's what Ugly Duckling music is. Maybe that's one of the things where we've gotten off track with over the years because if it's too complicated it's not a Ducks' tune. That's the secret of almost any big hit, if it gets too complicated people don't understand it."

*In an earlier interview you said the band could only play to a nostalgia craze: what did you mean by that?*

"That's not what I intended to say. We're not really out to play to a nostalgia audience at all. We're not out there to play a bunch of old material to a bunch of old fans. I don't look at it that way at all.

"We're trying to grow. If the band felt that way we wouldn't be playing at all."

*What about the danger of becoming self-parodies?*

"We were always a parody. I think that would be good. I think that was part of our strength in the '60s because we were kind of laughing at the music scene when we first came out. We were a bunch of guys who didn't have a clue what they were doing — absolutely no brains at all.

"We're still acting the same way. I mean we haven't changed anything. We still don't know what we're doing. We still don't even know how to play good."

*After the breakup of the Ducks in 1967, David and Robin formed a band called the Gnu. The band broke up and in 1973 David Byngham formed his own band under the name Ugly Ducklings.*

"That was a mistake I wasn't involved in. It wasn't the Ugly Ducklings, it was just a ... (pause)...it was just a thing Dave's agent wanted to do to draw people. They were going to do Rolling Stones covers. So the agent decided they should call themselves the Ugly Ducklings, but it wasn't the Ducks."

by Ian Mitchell

paladin, n. (Fr., from *L. palatinus, PALATINE*), a knight of the court of Charlemagne; a knight-errant.

That's what you get if you look the word up in the dictionary. Or, if you're old enough, the name might suggest the character played by the late Richard Boone in *Have Gun, Will Travel* some twenty-odd years ago. Both of which are pretty far removed from the conglomerate currently trading under the name at various bars around the city. But if the name isn't too familiar as of yet, perhaps I should just mention the fact that their ranks include ex-Bopcat Dwayne Wayne on guitar and former Velour/Sidewinder Mean Steve Piano on — aw, do I have to tell you? Yep, folks, we're talkin' 'bout rockabilly. Again.

Alright, I know what you're thinking: Rockabilly Part Five, Ho Hum. But before you flip over a few pages just stop and think a minute. Y'see, it seems to me that the current flurry of bands, recordings, and articles on the rockabilly front is nothing if not a hopeful sign for rock'n'roll as a whole. Personally, I think it's time that these acts were viewed strictly as rock'n'roll bands pure and simple, who just happen to be trading under the rockabilly banner. After all, they've given as much to rock'n'roll as they've taken from it over the past couple of years. And it would certainly be easier to separate the men from the boys in search of nothing more than a good bandwagon to jump on. Because a good rockabilly band can compete (musically, if not commercially) with anybody, anywhere, without having to rely overmuch on identification with a particular genre. All of which brings us full circle to the subjects of this article.

Had things gone differently, the Paladins might have made their debut in SHADES last spring when the local rockabilly scene was surveyed in these pages. However, as luck would have it, the band missed out on both that feature and January's rockabilly festival due to circumstances beyond their control.

"Yeah, we were gonna make our big splash at the rockabilly festival. That was in February (late January, actually), and we went in and recorded two weeks prior to that. We really knocked ourselves out recording and all that, and then the next night after getting out of the studio, I get the phone call from Steven — 'Oh, uh, I got a problem, I broke my hand' — Why didn't you break your head?"

Steve — "Yeah, I was fending off autograph hounds, after they heard the tape."

But maybe it was for the best, after all. Time is often the most precious commodity a band could want (even if most of them don't realize the fact; that's why you end up with so many half-assed first albums); and the enforced layoff gave Dwayne and Steve the chance to more fully consolidate their aims and ambitions for the group, not to mention its lineup. The two have finally, it seems, linked up with a permanent rhythm section in the persons of Jonathan Thackeray, double bass, and Greg Metal-

lic, drums. So tell us a little about yourselves, boys.

Jonathan — "I was travelling for a few years, in various bands, playing electric bass, and I got sick of the whole thing so I decided to go back to school, to Conservatory, and study classical ... It was really strange, because I was looking through the paper, through the Dramatic-Musical thing and I seen this ad for a standup bass player and a standup drummer — that's pretty strange, y'know? — and I wasn't really looking for a gig, I was just really curious: I was brought in by that standup bass, standup drummer thing. I called them up, and I think I spoke to Steve, and he was telling me about it, and he said, 'Why don't you come on down?' 'Nah, nah...' So this went on for about an hour, and finally I ended up coming on down, and after the first day I was really nervous because I'd only been playing upright bass for a couple of weeks and, uh... it was a scared, uh, thrill, kind of, 'cause I'd never done a gig before, playing double bass, I'd never auditioned playing double bass."

S — "He never auditioned naked, either."

D — "We wanted that double bass, though, that was our ... We really found a needle in a haystack with Jon; it was just so hard finding someone who's into the upright bass, so..."

*But were you at all familiar with rockabilly bass stylings?*

J — "Not at all. Oh, I've heard it on the radio, as one of those toss-on-the-dial things. And now the more I listen to it the more I like it, but playing it, and the challenge of playing it, is what's really brought out my adrenalin. It's got a lot of swing involved ... I like to swing, and I've got a lot of opportunities in this band, a lot of freedom to play what I want to play, and that's what I like the most about it."

S — "Hey, wait a minute..."

Greg — "We've been meaning to talk to you about that..."

*What about you, then? How'd you get mixed up with these guys?*

G — "I started out the same way as Jon. They called me up — Dwayne got my number from their old drummer, and he got me up on Friday afternoon to do a gig on Friday night, and we got together that afternoon and I hooked up with them."

But though the Paladins are most definitely a band, in the truest sense of the word — all for one and one for all, that sort of thing — no one would deny that it's Dwayne and Steve who form the musical and conceptual core of the band. The initial musical liaison between the two has already been chronicled in these pages, as has the Bopcats bustup which left the guitarist high and dry for a time. This could provide fertile ground for a full-scale piece of NME-style investigative scam-mongering; I could almost see it now-DWAYNE: DID HE FALL OR WAS HE PUSHED? Anyway, we'd heard the Bopcats' side of the story and I was interested in just what his feelings were regarding both the split and his two-year tenure with the group.

"It was a great experience, it just came to a point where it became, the band became not to be the band that I had started, and fair enough. I just am much happier playing what I wanna play; so in that sense I've opted out from trying to gain a bigger acceptance."

*What about what they're doing now?*

"Yeah, the second album, yes. It's better than the first, for sure. It's still not what I would have seen myself ... I think Jack's a very talented, very good guitar player, he's writing some really good stuff."

S — "I'd like to say something about that first album. I was originally invited to play on it and I still wanna do it."

Maybe they'll re-release it in three years like the Teenage Head album and you can add some overdubs. Anyway, there were a lot of good songs from that period which for obvious reasons the Bopcats are probably gonna phase out, if they haven't already. Do you have any plans to work them into your act?

D — "Ah... Well, there's only one song that we do that's a hangover from that and that's an instrumental called *Showtime* — we opened up with it, just to warm ourselves up. It's crossed my mind, and at different times we've tried them out, but I'm ... Just the fact that I'm still writing, I'd rather write new stuff, and I always have a band in mind when I'm writing, so it was ... There's only a couple of songs I can think of from then that would suit this band, like *Rockabilly Baby* would probably be a good song ... But I signed those songs over as part of the album deal; like, that helped to get a secure deal and I wanted that album to get a deal so I wouldn't be in debt up to my ears. So I kind of kissed those songs goodbye — to make an inside pun from one of the songs. I heard that song on the radio, I was driving up to Lake Huron to go camping and it was on some..."

S — "Don't tell people you go camping!"

D — "Why not? There's nothing wrong with that."

S — "'Uh, we set fire to some police cars.'"

Ah, the problems of maintaining one's rock'n'-roll image. But let's talk about the future now we've put the past away: since Mean Steve's hand has mended, the Paladins have managed to make up for lost time by playing as often as possible, beginning their assault upon the consciousness of Toronto with a series of low-key gigs in the city's north end.

D — "Well, we didn't get on the tracks again until May, really. We played a benefit, we did a ... The Sidewinders were kind enough to let us do a little guest spot at the Drake one time with them, and that helped us find our feet."

S — "They didn't tell us 'til later that we'd have to wash their cars."

D — "And then, uh, after that we started — this'd be around the time that Greg joined us — we were playing this defunct cowboy bar called Lucille's; like, it was kind of on the skids and we wanted a place to practise, and they wanted to bring

a crowd in, so we thought, Well, let's do a house stint there for a month and get the band together. Like, playing live equals a good six months of rehearsing. So that's what we did that month and it really got us together as a band."

S — "Brought the people, too."

*Yeah, I've noticed that you seem to have your own crowd of regulars.*

D — "Yeah, there's a lot of regulars now."

S — "We don't know their last names yet."

D — "Yeah, it's purely on a first-name basis."

*I remember talking to you around that time, and you were saying you'd decided to handle the vocals yourselves.*

D — "Yeah, that was what cost a lot of time in the fall, like, this would be the fall of last year; Steve and I, uh, didn't feel like singers at the time and we started looking for singers, advertising and trying to put singers..."

S — "We didn't feel like singers after we'd been through it so we decided to do it ourselves."

D — "That's it, y'know, we were teaching ... Y'know; we had some very good singers in that; it's just the style that we wanted to do, we were spending so much time trying to explain that style to them, that in the process we started to find our own voices, y'know, and just decided, well, why spend all this time on someone else, let's try it, y'know, let's do it. And I think it works out better for the band, because you get more of a feeling of a band than you do of a standup singer and then the band, y'know? So I think that was another twist of fate or whatever that it worked out for the better."

J — "I think it's more personal the way it is now with you two singing 'cause it keeps it in the band in a way."

S — "I might as well point out that we more or less sing what we've written."

*I was wondering just how the set as it is now breaks down in terms of material.*

D — "Out of about thirty songs there are ten originals; Steve and I are both writing, it's pretty evenly split there."

S — "I printed for a while 'til he taught me how to write. He taught me numbers..."

That basically brings us up to date. Except for the Paladins' Tuesday night residency at the Cameron over the month of July, which is where I managed to catch 'em in full flight. On the basis of this showing, at least, the Paladins bear out in full the contention put forth at the beginning of this piece; of the bands I've seen, they come closest to actually transcending and rendering irrelevant the restrictions of the genre straitjacket.

First off, they don't look particularly like a rockabilly band is supposed to look these days; their collective visual is closer to E Street '82 than Memphis '55. Secondly, they exhibit an impressive command of various musical idioms: Dwayne supplies a hefty dollop of Canvey Island rivrum and blues, while Mean Steve adds his own brand of boogie-woogie and swing stylings to the more basic brand of Jerry Lee-style hammering 88's which has served the likes of Ian Hunter so well in the past.



What sort of attitude would you say characterizes the Ducks?

"There's then and now. Now we approach things differently. We don't have a lot of time to spend together so we try to make the best use of our time creatively."

"We spend a lot of time thinking and trying new ideas. If they work for the band, fine. We've made mistakes before with songs that haven't come across that well. But we have to feel that it fits the mold."

What's that mold?

"A feel. It should be easy to put into words. It just works or it doesn't. There's no definition. What makes an Ugly Duckling, I don't know."

Although most "garage" musicians wouldn't admit it, there is a very close affinity between garage music and punk. Both forms are fueled by raw energy, if nothing else. Mayne produced the Viletones' ep **Look Back In Anger** for Razor Records and so the two eras come into contact.

How similar is the attitude of the Ducks' compared to punk? Many people consider the Ducks to be proto-punks.

"I think a lot of punk bands cared more for the image than the music. Whereas in our era music was more important than image."

What was your opinion of the whole punk movement?

"I don't know if it was a movement. I think it was just that people were becoming fed up with packaged album products. People wanted to relate to their music. How does a kid in a garage relate to something that cost a quarter of a million to produce? He would need a very sophisticated set-up to come even close. The reason why punk was successful was because kids could relate to it."

Did you see a little of the Ducks in the Viletones?

"Some."

You've said that if the Ducks were ever to start playing full time they wouldn't do it in Toronto. Why not?

"You'd burn yourself out. The club situation is even worse now than it was a couple of years ago

and it's not getting any better. There's only the Mocambo, really, that's a high profile place. So you're stuck with doing the bar-rooms."

So why did the Ducks never head down to the States? You've never even performed publicly there.

"Again it was more management problems. It was our fault. People kept saying the wrong things. We should have taken the initiative and done it. Part of the problem was that the record company didn't care about what happened to the Ducks so long as the dollars were flowing their way."

In an earlier interview you said the Ducks intentionally played undanceable music. How do you do this? And doesn't this defeat the purpose?

(laughs) "That goes back to our insolent attitude. We used to play in the weirdest places, hockey rinks and auditoriums. We never really played the bars, just one night stands. So it was always big deals where there was room for about a thousand people and they'd always be dances."

"So we got fed up with their dancing and decided to write songs with a lot of stops and starts. Sure, we wanted them to have a good time, but we thought what was the point of us coming if they were just going to dance."

So what sort of stuff are you listening to today?

"I like the Flock of Seagulls. I'm not crazy about electro-beat because it can become an overkill. To me it's an effect. But now it's like overkill. They've used it on everything. The way it's being used it's just being totalled."

What sort of importance would you give the Ducks in the whole spectrum of Canadian roll'n'roll history?

"You're asking the wrong person. I really don't know. I'm shocked when people ask that sometimes. Probably more important than I know because quite honestly I would say not very much."

Finally, what can people expect with your shows around town in the future?

"They're going to see a good show, I hope. They're going to see a tighter unit in terms of musical direction because at least now we know what to play. We're not pulling these chestnuts out

# UGLY DUCKLINGS AGAIN

Peter Martin



of the fire and playing a lot of junk.

Basically, our show will be 75 per cent original tunes and the odd cover. If they liked the old Ducks they'll enjoy the show."

Of course the show will be nothing like Charlie Brown's Place when the Ugly Ducklings were just a bunch of snotty kids out of high school. Now John Read has job commitments that will force the group to replace him with Ron Cameron, an ex-Duck. Their worlds have grown up around those

days in the Village. And little seems to have changed; they're still practicing one day a week and yes, they still dream about making it to the "big time".

"I'll be working on going down to New York city. You know you play the Mocambo and a couple of gigs around the city. What are you going to do? Rehearse and go to Kingston? I mean, we're rehearsing and writing all these tunes, goddammit, we might as well go play somewhere."

His playing really comes as something of a revelation, as I only saw him perform once as a Velour and retain only the broadest impressions of that very enjoyable night; given the chance to catch him over a couple of sets it becomes obvious what a good performer he really is (I'm especially partial to the old elbow slide down the keyboard; what a showman!) Dwayne, of course, is his own inimitable self, while in all their endeavours both frontmen are aided and abetted most ably by what has to be one of the most impressive rhythm sections in the city.

Not that all of the bugs have yet been ironed out. Steve and Dwayne's reach as vocalists sometimes exceeds their grasp. And there are the usual problems getting a decent sound together in clubland. But they have consummate taste and skill, and the other stuff will come with time (one has to keep reminding oneself that this is in fact a new band, despite the long and honourable careers of its founders). Materialwise, in addition to their own numbers, which I don't know the titles of, they play stuff like Jerry Lee's *Milk Shake Mademoiselle*, *My Babe*, and Buddy's *Rockin' Around with Ollie Vee*, the only other holdover from the Bopcats days. All in all, a good rockin' night could be had every Tuesday by all.

Speaking to the band between sets, I was struck not only by their strong collective sense of camaraderie/humour but by the acuity with which Dwayne and Steve in particular view the machinations of the music scene. Having just finished covering the Stray Cats during their stay here, I was surprised to find the opinions aired in that piece echoed by the band (without, I might add, any prompting from me; the piece hadn't seen print at that point).

You said earlier that by leaving the Bopcats you've opted out of any mass acceptance. What do you really think are the possibilities in that direction?

"The possibilities for this band, you mean?"

And for rockabilly in general.

D — "Yeah, well, that's a good question, because it appears to me that the whole thing of rockabilly as being the sort of in thing for the last couple of years, or one of the things for the last couple of years, is it's not really the kind of rockabilly I really like: I mean, I don't think of it as being slick and clean-cut and all that ... I mean, I think more of the Jerry Lee Lewis and wild side of it, just rock'n'roll. It's just meat'n'bones rock'n'roll, and it seems to me that you can get anybody going to the hairdresser and get a rockabilly haircut and sort of play this semi-disco rockabilly. It just isn't at all like that, y'know? That's what ... This band, in my mind, is just what I wanted to do after I left the last band."

S — "We've had a lot of comments from people, a lot of comments to the tune of 'I don't like rockabilly but I like you', and I kinda think of it more like the other way around, like they've never heard it before, basically, because the things, that we really don't need to mention what they are exactly, but the things that most people are more

bound to hear, aren't it anyway, right? So I think maybe it's just a question of, uh, more people being introduced to it, and, uh, I don't think there's any reason to think that it shouldn't be us to be the vehicle to introduce it. When we played at Lucille's we had a very varied ... y'know, it's a strange area there, at Eglinton? — and we had some really wonderful nights, right, and we had an incredibly diverse crowd, we had people who were seventeen, eighteen — it doesn't matter because the place is closed now and we also had couples, like, four or six people come in who were, like, in their fifties, right? And they dug it, and when they danced, like, when they hit the dance floor, man, they could swing, and they could swing the ass off anyone in the place. And that's the truth, y'know?"

I think the image thing can work both ways; it can turn people off, but it can also attract people who might not have gotten into it otherwise.

D — "Well, I think that whole thing'll swing, y'know, the pendulum'll swing, because right now the trouble with bands is that they're so obsessed with two things, style and image, that they've

forgotten the flesh y'know, forgotten the substance."

S — "Y'know, they've, in a way, helped from that point, like people see it and they kind of dig it, and they want to see what it's really about. In that respect it's not such a bad thing that it has such a high profile, y'know?"

The Stray Cats are a band that are very, very image conscious, yet I think they do quite well in all departments.

D — "They stand out from so many — They are the rockabilly band. But my impression was that they had all the elements there just right; they had the look, the music, they had everything, but somehow the whole package didn't, still doesn't add up to me as being what it's really all about. It does take it to a broader audience..."

S — "Although they were very good."

D — "They were, they were very good."

And so are the Paladins. But being very good isn't necessarily good enough anymore. Though

the whole question of image, integrity, and the relationship between the two has been blown out of all proportion over the last decade or so; in the end, all it comes down to is how many compromises you can stand to make before you lose whatever it is that made it worth starting out in the first place. The Paladins are trying to get what they can by playing quality rock'n'roll and hoping for the best. However, the way things are going it looks like the future will see rock'n'roll relegated to the same insular backwaters as blues and jazz have been. Which may not be a bad thing; after all, given the choice of ending up like Elvis Presley or Dave Edmunds I know what I'd pick. You pays you your money and you takes your choices, I guess. Problem is, these days one seems to end up paying more money for fewer choices, and Canadian money buys you even less. By which I mean that it's tough to make it anywhere nowadays, but it's even tougher north of the 49th Parallel. You know that, I know that, they know that. I guess you could say that the Paladins have made their choice. I think they've made the right one.

# THE PALADINS MAKING THEIR PLAY

Lorna Mills





# CARROLLING ON

by Elliot Lefko



When Jim Carroll arrived in Toronto a few months ago, he looked as if he were finally beginning to enjoy the rock and roll lifestyle. It's been two years since he recorded his debut album, **Catholic Boy**, and this was his third Toronto appearance since then. His first was at the El Mocambo a couple of nights after John Lennon died, and then last December he was one of nine poets at a gigantic bard bash entitled *Wholly Communion* (Shades #22).

Carroll's third Toronto date was as an anonymous opening act for the J. Geils Band at Maple Leaf Gardens. Carroll bounded onstage with his new band and played most of the songs from his first album and a couple of covers, such as *Sweet Jane*. The set was poorly received until he launched into *The City Drops Into The Night* and *People Who Died*. During the final chorus of *People*, Carroll substituted John Belushi's name in the song, paying tribute to a friend.

"I got to know John Belushi a couple of years before he died," recalls Carroll. "He really hated the image of being liked by fraternities. He liked things that were outrageous, that were extreme. He tested people's balls. It's funny now, but he loved *People Who Died*. When he heard it he freaked out. He used to drop by our rehearsals and play it on drums. Now I've added the verse dedicated to him so I'll think about him every time I play that song."

Besides recording and releasing records, Carroll will shortly see two of his books of poetry published. "There's two kinds of poems. The first are the California poems which are a series of page-long poems. The second are The New York Variations which are delicate little poems which were culled from my diaries. And I've written a lot of poems since I started recording."

Carroll feels that the books are just as important as the records. "I really want to see those new books published. Rock and roll is great but it doesn't provide the pleasure of working on your own inner landscape. I'll always feel like a poet. It's my strength," he says.

Part of the problem with rock and roll for Carroll is the touring. He'd rather bypass that altogether and just release records, play a couple of hometown gigs, and write. Unfortunately circumstances dictate otherwise and he is forced into opening for J. Geils and having to deal with uninterested audiences and media.

"I did this phone interview with a d.j. from CHOM in Montreal. He was a real asshole. He starts off by asking if I've been in music a long time. Actually not, I tell him. Then he says, 'So this is your third album'. Actually it's the second, I point

out. Why don't they do research?"

Asked how he feels about his audience's ability to grasp what he's saying, he replies, "Let's face it. My music requires concentration. But you don't need verbal sophistication. You get it through the heart. It's hard to fool the kids. I think that they've got more imagination than creative writing students."

One of the reasons Carroll entered the rock race was because he didn't like what was happening to contemporary music. "Most groups just don't have any intelligence in their lyrics. It's cock rock lyrics, escape lyrics, and techno pop lyrics. It's background music for fucking. Music for the apocalypse."

He does have his favourites in today's music scene. "Belushi introduced me to Fear. And I know The Dead Kennedys. Jello is such a soft-spoken guy. He calls me Mr. Carroll. He's the Tiny Tim of punk rock," quips Mr. Carroll.

On the subject of punk, he says that he's sickened by the number of punk poseurs that have crept into rock circles over the past couple of years. "I can believe some of those kids. They've got a clear vision of themselves. But most are just using it as a fashion. I was at a concert with my wife and I see this guy in designer punk. He was wearing a swastika. I wanted to walk past him, but I was furious. I said, do you realize what it symbolizes? And he just looked at me with a pretty little smile. I said take it off, or I'll rip it off. Finally I smacked him in the mouth and pulled it off. I punched him again and kicked him and then some goons joined in — some for him and some for me."

While his emotions occasionally erupt in displays such as the fight with the pseudo-punk, Carroll says that he usually directs his feelings into his writing. "I'm working on a prose poem that is in the form of a diary. It's a surrealistic tale of a really crazy person. I'm cataloguing everything he would do or say. For instance he's in a bank holding the teller hostage. He wants the wetness, the darkness, the light; wants what's below. Her breasts are dormant. She won't get hurt."

Carroll's future includes another album, and hopefully a film of his frank, teenage-junkie novel **The Basketball Diaries**. Right now the book is being optioned by a Hollywood producer. Carroll says he's received money up front for the option, but the big money comes when the option is picked up and the movie is actually made. "I saw **Christiane F** and thought it was terrible. It was too explicit. You don't have to show the spike actually going in the arm. But on the other hand, Hollywood won't do much better. It'll probably be pretty tame. They don't want to confront audiences with reality."

## ALMOST EMOTIONAL



THE JITTERS  
by K. Fredrickson

Paul Till

Jitters value originality; "An audience may appreciate cover material but only original material makes a splash."

What do they think about the Toronto bar scene? "There are," says Blair, "too many non-players cashing in on the bar scene. They're strangling it, pulling out all those R&B warhorses." He wonders why those rock musicians who keep harping about their all-consuming interest in playing free-form jazz don't just go out and do it. "As far as I'm concerned," he says, "I've heard *Caledonia* all the times I care to. I have artistic pretensions like anyone else, but I try and wrestle them down."

In the aftermath of (the so-called) New Romanticism, I asked the Jitters their opinion of such media-fostered musical movements. Matthew speaks up; "Who? You mean bands like Duran Also Ran?" "And how about that most recent success story — Haircut Explodes?" Blair suggests. "All image and no content," is Danny's judgement. The prevailing scene right now is "dispassionate and boring — so much control is anti Rock and Roll." Blair adds: "I saw a Flock of Seagulls, possibly the *dullest* band. They just don't look like they're having any fun." The Jitters aren't against popular movements per se, but they believe music should dictate attitude, then that attitude can inspire fashion. The Jitters bemoan the Toronto bar scene. They have observed that many groups play for each other's approval, often at the expense of their audience, resulting in a closed and often cold musical atmosphere. To my mind, the Jitters are living proof that a successful fusion of music and image can be achieved without the image becoming a band.

The Jitters style themselves a band of players, but realize that musical sincerity is not a decision but an earned distinction which only an audience can bestow. Honesty between a band and an audience — on the part of a band, the will to please and the determination not to compromise; on the part of an audience the readiness to listen and enjoy, but also to adapt and expand their tastes — can only be achieved after an equally flexible relationship exists between band members. "We identify and learn from one another's material — the big difference is we like each other's work." The Jitters form their own "song-writing cooperative" stemming from Danny and Blair's early invol-

vement as a song writing team, which now includes Matthew.

Who inspired the Jitters? They will admit only the most obvious influences: the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and other bands of the 60's such as the Kinks. Without being specific they insist that a broad variety of influences, both early and modern, have affected their material. But the Jitters have worked hard to focus their interests and create a characteristic sound. As Blair puts it; "In the 60's and 70's if you played different kinds of music you were considered versatile, in the 80's you are simply said to 'lack direction'." Blair characterizes the Jitters sound as straight Rock and Roll, and while they may suffer from rock nostalgia (like everybody else), they aren't about to make a religion out of it.

The Jitters have no qualms about shooting for something big. They are not fazed by the challenge of the moment; the competition between many bands looking for a break. More failures and fewer moderate successes are noted on the British pop scene, and while British groups may be overcome by the enormous importance of the U.S. market, Danny is realistic; "You have to make it in the States." Toronto may have a sophisticated pop audience for local bands to court, but the Jitters agree that because it is a limited market, nothing is happening here yet in terms of record deals.

Despite the careful and deliberate year-long preparation that went into creating the Jitters, the band is in no real rush to be on vinyl. They considered releasing an independent record, but in Canada, "the market is not that healthy." "If something is really good, it eventually happens, doesn't it?" asks Matthew. "And besides," Blair adds, "who needs their ego stroked to no avail with an album sitting on the counter at Cheapies?"

I asked them about their name. "It took us six months to think it up. We wanted a name you didn't have to mumble when asked." Even so, it took Matthew a while to get used to 'the Jitters'. "Quite a few people have wondered about it before they came to see us. Afterwards, though, they've said they can see why that's our name."

Sometimes it is good strategy to poke fun at the business. Danny points out that one great name for a no-scene band is *Theatre of Hate*. The Jitters, too, wanted to aim for something strong enough to

stand on its own, without any obvious strings attached. They have always been opposed to deliberately clever lyrics; obviously they were also opposed to a deliberately clever name.

The Jitters have an ongoing association with poet and song-writer Robert Priest. It began when Danny approached Robert needing help with his lyrics. Since that time the band has maintained close contact with Robert, recently backing him on his EP. "It was a case of mutual admiration and respect that started our combination, and we haven't regretted the involvement," states Danny. Robert and Danny have co-authored more than several songs. Danny credits Robert with helping him create better lyrics. The involvement between poet and band means that the Jitters are being seen by a broader audience and Robert is now better recognized for his song-writing talent.

Upcoming dates for the Jitters tend to include five or six appearances in a given month. The feeling is that Toronto does not offer them much sound space. "We played Grossman's, but they told us we were too loud. We told them loudness was an essential part of Rock and Roll. We certainly don't consider ourselves a bombastic band, even though we've been known, on occasion, to break a few strings."

The Jitters spend most of their free time together. Does this indicate that they are preoccupied with each other or their music? "We get along well together," explains Danny, "but we have a thing for girls." I asked them about their taste in women. Do they prefer the intelligent variety? "Yeah," signs Blair, "when we look out into the audience and see twenty-five beautiful girls reading books — now that's something." Matthew shakes his head reproachfully, "We don't like to joke about things like that." "No," Blair agrees, stroking his chin, "girls aren't funny. In fact," he adds, "we're working on a medley that begins; 'You're sixteen, you're beautiful, and you're havin' my baby — what a lovely way to say that I'm leavin' on a jet plane'."

"We're serious about having fun, but we're not just one of them good time bands," Blair concludes. Apparently the boys have come to the point where they'd agree when he says; "Guys, I have so much fun doing this, I can't ever imagine stopping."



by Elliott Lefko and Mark Leach

"Why can't no one ever touch a fire spirit?  
Why can't no one ever hold a fire spirit?  
Why can't no one ever feel a fire spirit?"

—Jeffrey Lee Pierce

Jeffrey Lee Pierce, a pudgy 23-year-old Californian, wades into the darkness of Larry's Hideaway early in the evening of his first concert date outside of the United States. Sporting his trademark white sea captain's hat, Jeffrey Lee shuffles up to the bar and orders the first of what will be an endless series of beers. The chasers will come later when he finds that the band has a free open tab. But it's only 5:00 p.m. and he's taking things slowly.

Pierce's band The Gun Club is quickly gaining a reputation for being one of the best bands to come out of California since the inception of the punk/new wave scene. Their first album **Fire Of Love** is a bluesy, hard-edged, debut with introspective lyrics ("Going to buy me a graveyard, kill everyone who's done me wrong"), that belie Pierce's youth.

Meeting Pierce, one encounters a young man who deflects a more-than-average amount of shyness, by rattling off diatribes on a variety of subjects. It seems that the first thing he does upon entering a new town is to check out the local alternative record stores, looking not for his own album, but for collectable blues records. His lone comment on Canada was to announce that he counts among his very favourite albums **Tonight's The Night**, by Neil Young. And he says the limited tour to support that album contained one of the best, albeit also one of the darkest and gloomiest shows he's ever seen. Another favourite album is Lou Reed's **Berlin**, and especially *Sad Song*. It becomes apparent that Pierce likes his music surly and depressing, with lots of feeling/passion/heart.

Later that evening, as the drinks begin to flow, Pierce begins to transform himself into a character from one of his songs. ("All dressed up like an Elvis from Hell"). With one hand cradling a glass filled with whiskey and the other balancing a beer and a microphone, he bites off his song lyrics with a maniacal grin. The resident Toronto punks growl in response to Pierce's antics, and a couple even jump on stage. Of course it's all an act; for as the group's road manager would say later, "Cap'n Jeff wouldn't harm a fly."

Sitting down in his Hideaway dressing room cum hotel room, Pierce is in very good spirits as he conducts his first Canadian interview. He reels off stories with the robust zeal of an old time storyteller. Often he punctuates his tales with deep, hearty belly laughs. As far as drinking being a problem, Pierce isn't too concerned. When asked if the engineer on his album, Tito Larriva, was an alcoholic, Pierce grinned and said, "who's not?"

**SHADES:** *What is the difference between Slash Records and Ruby Records, the Slash subsidiary label to which you're signed?*

J.L.P.: Ruby's a tax write-off.

**SHADES:** *All the bands that don't seem to have immediate commercial possibilities belong to Ruby.*

J.L.P.: That's what it's for. It works on two levels. Slash is a highly aesthetic label and they wouldn't just sign a pop band because there's a girl in it and they knew they'd make a lot of money. There's lots of bands they could have signed, like The Plimsouls, but didn't because they didn't like them.

The owner of Slash is interested in more daring music. He formed Ruby basically for The Flesheaters, whose record he wanted to put out. He didn't want to do a major splash though. He'll usually pick up records that are already finished. So you get bands who have been fucking around recording somewhere, and are shopping around to sell the tape. We were doing it for Fatama Records (the Plugz label). We were paying for the recording, and the label advised us to shop around with it first. We took it to I.R.S., they didn't even look at it. Slash thought we were a jerk off band until they heard the tape. Then they began taking us seriously and sent an engineer to finish the record, which was to be four more songs, yet became six. Then the deal was over because it was only for one album. They had put all these precautions in the contract because they were sure they weren't going to make back their money. But they have, it's been selling and only on the basis of the record, there's been no promotion. We were a pretty unknown band in L.A. We were lucky to open up for Top Jimmy at The Cafe. The record began escalating in colleges, places like Denver, everyone knew us. Boston: forget it, we were like The Rolling Stones. And other bands were supportive of us. X would always put us on bills. We had a lot in common with X for awhile, because we're such ratty-looking groups. We would be up there with crucifixes and hair falling down.

**SHADES:** *But it's more than that. You've got a real American sound in your music.*

J.L.P.: That too. The big thing with John Doe and Exene (of X) and me, is that we'd have parties all the time playing records. We were real manic blues collectors. They did this version of Justine once that was a murderer. Plus, Top Jimmy's original

group was X. They tried to do a class photo of all the people who had been in Top Jimmy's and they found that about twenty of them were untraceable. There were about sixty altogether. All The Blasters, Nick Knox of The Cramps, The Go-Go's drummer. Name a band in L.A. and one member's been in Jimmy's band, for at least a night. Tom Waits, Lydia Lunch, David Lee Roth. Not anybody, but everybody. Dead people were in Top Jimmy's band. Darby, he was in it, fucked up out of his mind. Yeah I guess they couldn't have that class photo because some of those people are dead.

Jimmy used to work at Top Taco, which is a taco joint, and how he got so popular on the scene was because he used to really dig the punks because of the way they looked and shit, in the real early days of '77. He used to give them free food because they were all on the skids, but he liked them because they looked so wild. Then he got fired for having a party in the backroom. He put vodka in the orange whip machine. He was selling orange whip that was three-fifths vodka. Later X came up to him and said they wanted to form this band around him. And it turned out he was a real good singer.

**SHADES:** *But somebody like that never's going to make it.*

J.L.P.: Oh I don't know, maybe if the right people get ahold of him. There's a lot of people who have immense amounts of talent that have to be in the right hands to even get a chance. I'm in the right hands because I'm in mine. I manage The Gun Club.

**SHADES:** *You're only 23, where did you develop your sense of business? Most people your age, entering the music business, get fucked over real fast.*

J.L.P.: It's just the way I always imagined it as a kid. I always figured it was like this. And it is, isn't it? I had a lot of tutoring though. I worked for Blondie in 1977, when they were just starting. I worked for their press agent. I was there when all the heavy shit was going down. Kicking Gary Valentine out of the band, signing with Chrysalis. Hagglng, bitching. Don't fuck with Debby or we'll kill you. I was the guy holding the broken bottle saying you fuck with Debby, you'll die. So I saw all the shit go on before I had this group. And I was a writer for awhile, for Slash Magazine. I wrote under Ranking Jeffery Lee. Obviously, writing demands a lot of business, a lot of hustling. By the time I got to this, well it was easy, shit. Plus, my mother got divorced when I was a kid, and she was basically taken care of by her Jewish customers. She was a manicurist and ran a fashion store, in a strictly Jewish part of Los Angeles. She was Mexican, but because of where she worked and who she knew we were basically raised in a real Jewish atmosphere. (I guess being-Jewish-gives-you-a-good-business-sense is what Jeffery Lee is saying.)

**SHADES:** *Where did you start to hear blues?*

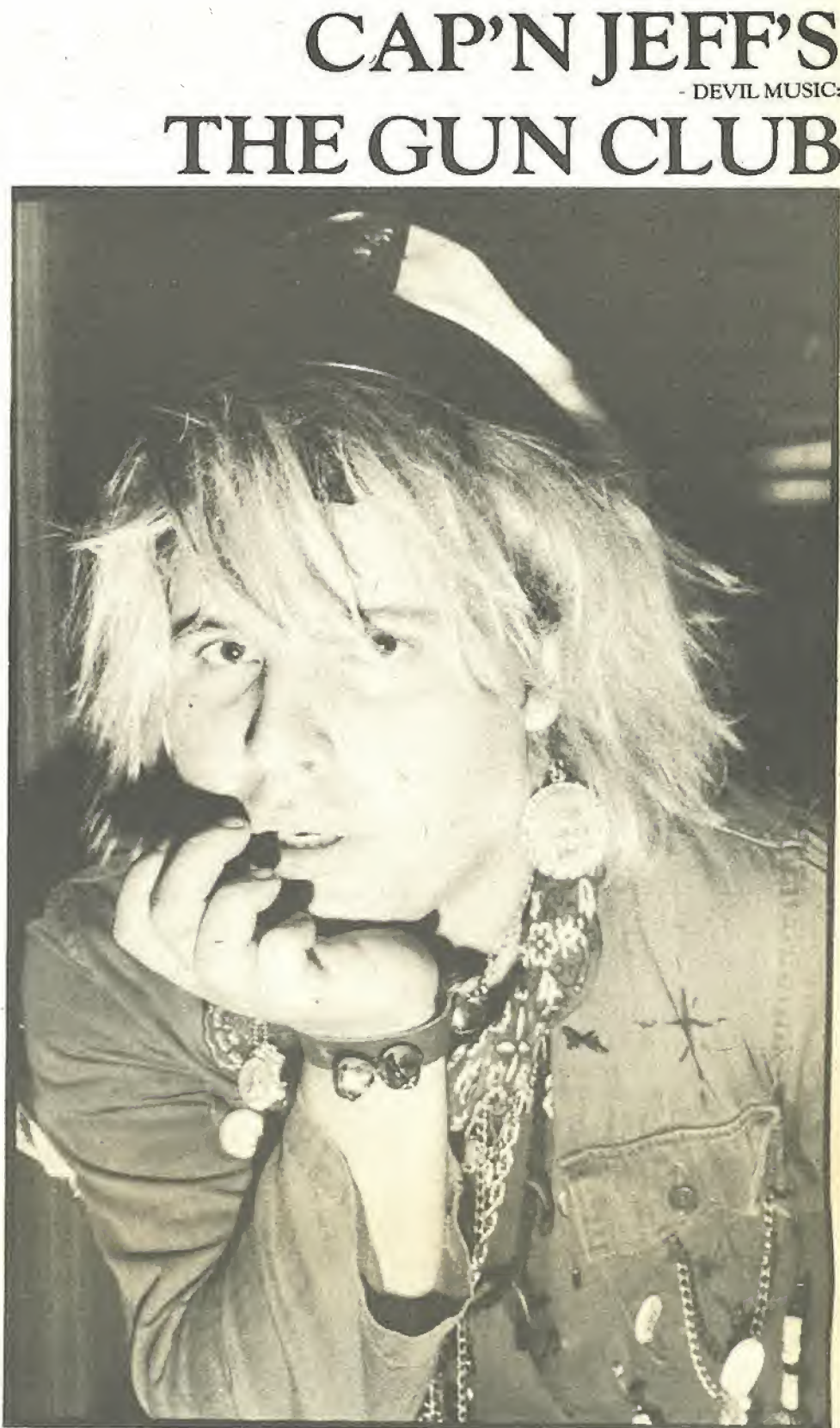
J.L.P.: I probably first heard this shit from Creedence Clearwater. I didn't start buying records of it until four years ago. It was because of my friend Fast Freddy. He was really into it. Fast Freddy would play it for me and I'd go, "not bad". And then later on Phil Alvin in The Blasters. He was into the shit that came before the war, the acoustic guitar players. He got me into that stuff. I was into Howlin' Wolf in 1977. Also, when punk rock was just happening, there was a real sympathy for lots of older music. I was first into rockabilly, then I heard blues and it seemed like a lot better versions of rockabilly. So eventually I couldn't even listen to rockabilly anymore.

I give a lot of credit to Fast Freddy. He was this weird person, a total anti-social son of a bitch who wouldn't listen to the same thing anyone else was listening to. He's a very strong DJ around L.A. who knows everything about music. His record collection couldn't fill this room. He doesn't have enough room in his house for his records, he only keeps the 45's there. The albums he has stashed in a storage room somewhere. Once in awhile he goes out to the storage room, picks out what he wants to listen to. The trouble with Fast Freddy is he has trouble keeping a job, and he never has any money, so he has to sell lots of his records sometimes. I've bought lots of my records off him.

Another guy like that is Bob Hite, the lead singer of Canned Heat, who died last year. Phil Alvin and I went to his house. He had a really giant living room, and the whole right wall was 45's, the whole left wall was 78's, and then a little section in the middle of albums, he didn't even deal with 33 speed. He didn't deal with anything that was made before 1966. I mean his whole world ended at James Brown. The earliest records were from 1919, 1917, ragtime records, vaudeville.

**SHADES:** *How does what you're doing fit into all that? It's obviously in that spirit, but it's not the same technical thing.*

J.L.P.: It's not in the same spirit at all. But it's some of the same technique. We sometimes play similar things, but we definitely don't play with the same attitude. A lot of time we'll play a Howlin' Wolf song, the same thing he wrote, but we just distort it, screw it up, mess it around, just to add more of a feeling. It's just kind of destroying what you like. I really love this music but I couldn't play it straight, I have to be more horrible about it. The standard



blues isn't enough to satisfy me. Although I can get real jazzed up, listening to a blues record. All that though is just the inception of a feeling, whereas by the time it gets to the band and we'll do the actual blues song, I'll already have advanced it three or four times until it's barely recognizable anymore. It becomes something a lot more negative. It's like taking blues and turning it into suicide. But it's the same thing with songs that were written even recently. When we do it, it comes out hotter and wilder. We did this song by T Rex and for a while there it got pretty weird. It turned from a pop song into the devil breathing. 'Cause you know he's (Marc Bolan) got that breathy voice and I've always tried to sing like that. The song was called *Hot Love*.

**SHADES:** *When did you first learn how to play guitar?*

J.L.P.: After I saw Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock. I wasn't at Woodstock, I was one of the dumb kids who went to see it when it came to the theatre. But what were you supposed to do in those years? I grew up in East Los Angeles where nobody knew nothing about nothing. It's like 95% Mexican. And not educated, very poor. The real hip Mexican cats were my friends when I was in school. They were into soul, they knew everything there was to know about Curtis Mayfield. This was when he was in The Impressions. Smokey Robinson, he was real important because if you would play his records, and the girls were drunk, we'll forget it. Every Mexican girl who I knew then and thought was really gorgeous, has now got three kids and a lot of weight on her. Mexican girls being so oppressed by all that Catholicism, they don't want to hold it back too long. Because they're all ready to reject it. The guys were all Mexican street bad dudes. They're only into the moment — into being the coolest person on their block. That's why they'll always stay there. I went back to East L.A. not too long ago, 'cause I had to see my doctor, I have the same doctor that I had as a kid. And I saw some of my friends, I ran into them in a liquor store, and then they took me to a party, and I saw some of my other friends, and they're not a bit different than when I was in school. And I'm not talking about high school, I'm talking about junior high. Their hair is longer, and they're all married, but they're

just the same. So soul music was all around as a kid, the first record I bought was a Motown record. Most likely *Ain't that Peculiar* by Marvin Gaye. But I finally realized that I just really really love music a lot. I'll branch off into different things and I'll always find something I like. Recently my drummer's been working on me to get into jazz and it's working. In a concert recently in D.C. I brought my radio on stage and turned on a jazz station. I stuck a microphone to it, and left it there and the band started playing to it.

**SHADES:** *How did you get from writing for Slash to playing in a group?*

J.L.P.: Oh, I was in bands way before I ever wrote. Everybody who wrote for Slash was in bands. Except for Claude Bessie (Kickboy) who was the editor. He could never really find real writers so he'd just get people from bands. A lot of people really love those articles 'cause they say it's really aesthetically good writing, wild writing, real honest writing. Well it's not writers, it's musicians. Craig Lee, the leader of The Bags (currently writing for a Los Angeles daily), Chris D. the leader of The Flesheaters. John and Exene wrote, under the pseudonyms of Cowboy and Cowgirl. Judith Bell, a painter.

**SHADES:** *Did Slash writers get paid? (ask Mark and Elliott with baited concern, hoping the answer will make them feel that they aren't the only ones doing this for the love of \_\_\_\_\_)*

J.L.P.: No way.

**SHADES:** *A recent gig of yours in Detroit got cancelled: what happened?*

J.L.P.: The police closed down the show before we even started. We bring on a lot of bad people some times. All these people in Detroit, they were ready to kill. One guy had been beating the stage so hard that he was bleeding up and down his arms. And that was for the first band, and then there was another one and then us. In L.A. it's okay though. The crazy people don't even pay any attention to us. Who have you seen in Toronto from L.A.?

**SHADES:** *X, The Screamers...*

J.L.P.: Wow (screaming) they're great. And X, I still think of them as being the best punk band in L.A. Wait till you see The Blasters. They're the best rockabilly band in L.A.



## The STRAY CATS in The LAST QUIFFS IN TOWN

IAN MITCHELL sees the rushes

YES, IT'S THOSE WILD ROCKABILLY CATS AGAIN!!! CRUISING DOWN ROUTE 66 IN FLEETS OF PINK '55 CHEVYS WITH FIVE FOOT WHIPLASH ANTENNAE HUNG WITH CONFEDERATE FLAGS AND DAVY CROCKETT COONTAILS, BLUE JEAN BOP ON THE RADIO, A BOTTLE OF JACK DANIELS IN ONE HAND AND A HANDFUL OF BENNIES IN THE OTHER, AND A SWITCHBLADE STUFFED DOWN ONE SOCK JUST IN CASE; BLACK PEG PANTS, A PURPLE SHIRT, SIDEBURNS LIKE SABRES, HAIR LOADED WITH ENOUGH GREASE TO COVER THE AXLES OF A FLEET OF SIXTEEN-WHEELERS. THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, RIGHT?

Well, maybe not.

Let's face it, pretence has always had its place in rock'n'roll. Just like it always has in showbiz, sports, and politics (Come to think of it, the latter two are pretty much showbiz as well). Nevertheless, the 1970's saw a marked jump in the hypola quotient, beginning with Mainman's purchase of a berth on the midnight train to stardom for a low rent messiah named Ziggy Stardust.

Sure, DeFries and the boys weren't doing anything too drastically different than Andrew Loog Oldham had essayed in the Sixties when he presented the Rolling Stones as a serious threat to Western civilization, besides which both acts had enough musical muscle to at least go some ways towards justifying the hype, which is more than can be said for certain less talented individuals (does anybody out there still remember Jobriath? Jay Gatsby?)

But the capper really came with the punk explosion of '76-77, when Malcolm McLaren and Bernie Rhodes, aided and abetted by a sensation-hungry media, opened up a real Pandora's box of myth-making and image manipulation. The fact that punk managed to spew forth a few worthwhile bands (who were good for a couple of years, at any rate) was pretty much negated by the eruption out of the punk maw of hundreds of half-baked ramalamaadoleque merchants (Come in, Jimmy Pursey, your fifteen minutes are up), not to mention the more recent plethora of minimally talented synthozoids serving up rancid slices of warmed-over funk which they lack even the (negligible) ability to translate into live performance (Hi there, big Human Leaguers!). Things have deteriorated to the point where you'd sure as hell better sell the sizzle rather than the steak because we're fresh out of steak, and if we had any it'd be too expensive anyhow.

So where do the Stray Cats, as the subjects of this piece, fit into all this? I mean, I like 'em, as — probably — do you, since you're taking the time to read this. So what's the problem? None, really, except to point out that six or seven years ago they probably had long hair and Led Zep T-shirts just like the rest of us. Unless they were *really* hip; then it would have been platform shoes and a Ziggy cut. Today, however, as I come out to the poolside patio of their downtown hotel, Brian Setzer, Lee Rocker, and Slim Jim Phantom (and 'cept for Brian, I'll bet that's not what their moms call 'em) are so absolutely dripping with rocker cool that I'm surprised the pool hasn't frozen over. All in black save for the odd pair of pink socks or leopardskin boots, elaborately coiffed, and in the case of Brian and Jim heavily tattooed, they look like the perfect distillation of some pulp novel version of fifties cool a la Harlan Ellison's *Spider Kiss*, well out of place when set against the general Holidays-in-the-Sun ambience poolside.

Thing is, a few years back Setzer was handling guitar chores for New York Roxy doppelgangers the Bloodless Pharaohs, while his future rhythm section played the blues around various Long Island bars. Actually, there's not much point going into the history of the band at this juncture because a) there ain't much to go into, and b) what there is gets covered adequately enough in the accompanying interview. Suffice it to say that they've had two albums released in the U.K. and Europe, the best bits (or somebody's idea of same) having finally seen release in North America recently in the form of a single lp (*Built for Speed*, EMI).

The record serves as a more than adequate introduction to the band for North American ears (and hopefully their radio playlists as well), containing the hit singles, the Dave Edmunds-produced tracks which probably gave the Cats their best production to date, and a handful of lesser-known numbers. As rockabilly practitioners they prove to be pretty surefooted and pretty much live up to their press, even if Brian Setzer's vocals sometimes comes across a bit too Cliff Richard clean-cut. Their forays into straight rock'n'roll and blues are more of a mixed blessing: *Rev It Up and Go* is a run of the mill Chuck Berry-style workout distinguished mainly by a key change every twelve bars, and *Little Miss Prissy* could easily be Canned Heat or any number of similar white blues acts,

though *You Don't Believe Me*, another bluesy number in an Elmore James vein, really swings. And the doowop of *Lonely Summer Nights* is a bit hard to take these days given the general camping up of the genre by the Sha Na Na's of this world, whatever its own merits might be. Nevertheless, the group are to be commended for trying to inject a bit of variety into proceedings that can all too easily degenerate into one dimensional raveups. Plus all but three of the songs featured on the album are band (mainly Setzer) compositions, though I can't say whether this holds true for the original albums. But maybe it's about time the band were allowed to say a few words for themselves. I began by trying to get a bit of dope on their pre-Stray Cat activities, though without much luck...

I'd like to go back to what you were doing before you formed the band. You (Brian) were in the Bloodless Pharaohs...

Brian — "No."

You mean you won't admit it.

"I was a hired guitar player."

OK. Meanwhile you (Jim) and Lee were in different blues outfits...

J — "Yeah, just various... We were just kids learning to play."

Well, how did you end up getting into rockabilly? After all, you had been working in musical areas that were pretty diverse, to say the least.

B — "Not really, I was doin' that all along. I didn't really write those songs that I used to do, I mean, I just played... Y'see, I guess it, like, started; like our folks listened to that kind of music around the house, and, um, we listened to the Beatles and the Stones when we were growing up, y'know — basically we wanted to hear who did those songs

It sure did, because you weren't there very long before you'd scored a hit record. Of course, it helped that you had Dave Edmunds working with you; that kind of expertise is something few young bands ever get the benefit of.

J — "And it was fun, because he approached us, as well. We were in a club one night and he had seen us, and, like, he came up and said, 'Are you recording soon?' And we said, 'Yeah, they're trying to stick us in a studio', and he says 'Have ya got a producer?', we says 'No', and he says 'I'm not busy', and we say we need a producer. Just like that."

B — "He's great. We're doing the next album with him."

J — "He's an easy person to work with. It's a pleasure."

So before too long you were the Next Big Thing. The problem is that these days the Next Big Thing is generally last week's thing before too much longer. Have you guys been able to sustain that initial burst of popularity over the last couple of years?

J — "Not so much in England as in France. France, we're gonna be legends there, I think we are already. England is very... what causes that are the, um... I call 'em the Sunday comics — the music papers — and the journalists have so many papers to fill up that they just gotta write. They're gonna hate ya one week and love ya the next, and they're gonna have different bands and all that. We still have lots of fans; I mean, we still play, like, sold-out gigs at the Lyceum, but it's not the initial thing where they go over the top with the press. That can only happen once, being the new kid on the block, and after that you become an established artist; but I think that we've outlived that. The good bands

rockabilly songs... Everybody else is trying to corner you anyways, so why try to corner yourself and help that?"

B — "I don't really think about it, it's hard to put into words. I just do it, y'know?"

You were just talking about roots music, and it seems to me that that's kind of an endangered species if you go by what's on the radio nowadays. Things have gotten pretty sanitized.

J — "Sanitized is a good word."

B — "All I know is that in Billboard we've jumped eighty-five places in three weeks, so we haven't encountered any problems in selling records. As far as I know, radio stations play it, and as far as I know, as far as kids go they're sick of Foreigner and Styx and all the other bands. And the record company controls a lot of that, because they're not gonna lose their investment..."

J — "Yeah, 'cause with us y'can get up and dance, but with Styx and Foreigner you get up and modulate." (Laughter).

B — "I'm not knockin' 'em, but there's definitely a place for us."

J — "I prefer heavy metal to, like, Styx and Foreigner... I consider Motorhead heavy metal, I like that cause there's some soul to it, y'can pound your foot to it..."

Lee (just returned from doing a phone int.) — "Or your head, or anything else you wanna pound. Somebody else's head."

And then there's this whole synthesizer thing where it's almost gotten to the point things were at in the early '60's; y'know, groups with guitars are out of style and all that.



P.L. Noble

originally, like let's say we heard *Honey Don't* by the Beatles, written by C. Perkins: well, who's C. Perkins? And we discovered it."

J — "Yeah, and they did *Words of Love* by Buddy Holly. So who the hell's Buddy Holly? — and, like, we'd go into the record store and find the album with this guy with a big pair of glasses on, and you buy it, take it home, y'know?"

Right. So you went to London around, what, July of 1980?

B — "June."

So how long were you playing New York before that?

B — "I guess about two years."

J — "Yeah, about two years. We started about '78, didn't we?"

B — "Yeah, as a sideline group, just playing bars on the weekend to make pocket money and stuff. But then it got... It got way out of hand."

So what made you decide to go overseas? You were taking quite a gamble...

J — "We figured we had nothin' to lose."

B — "We figured, why not? Y'see, we knew English people who always said, y'know 'Wow, y'know, I'm surprised that most Americans don't know who Buddy Holly is' — of course when the *Buddy Holly Story* came out... and Eddie Cochran and Gene Vincent... and we always knew, and they always told us, and it was in the back of our heads, that, hey, you guys should come to England and do it, like, American roll'n'roll is what we need here. So that was always in the back of our heads."

There was a big scene in France as well.

B — "Oh, France... It's bigger there than in England."

J — "France is the real stronghold of rockers... We just sort of gave it a try... and it paid off."

sustain themselves, like Madness came out of the 2-Tone thing. Madness are a great band and they're one of the bands that have stood the test of time."

The mention of ska and 2-tone brings up a whole other problem. Those bands were great for one album, but that type of music was so one-dimensional that you couldn't deviate from it one iota and still be a ska band. I don't really think that you have that problem, as you've been able to diversify things a little without any loss of identity. It doesn't seem to be as restrictive.

J — "That's good, because everybody seems to think that it is and asks us where are we gonna go next."

So where are you gonna go next?

B — "It's hard to say. I mean, the Stones started off as a straight rhythm & blues band, look where the Stones have gone. It's just rock'n'roll. We've been writin' a lot of songs lately; um... I've been kind of writin' a lot of straight rockers with kind of bridges to 'em. Like a Chuck Berry song but with a bridge, I've written a couple of those, and I've written another ballad, more of a bluesy type of ballad than a doowop ballad."

Did you feel any sense of a movement, something in common with other bands like the Shakin' Pyramids and the Polecats? Like there was with the ska thing, know what I mean?

J — "Yeah, yeah. Where we differ from that is that all these guys say, 'Hey, rockabilly rebels,' and hung out the Confederate flag, and we were always different because we never... Well, first of all we never did that... hung up on all that nonsense and, um, we always played, y'know, a couple of blues tunes, to break it up, and some rockers and some rockabillys, just kind of roots music, and the other bands were rockabilly rebels and they just did their

B — "Just goes to show; it's laughable, isn't it?"

J — "What sort of groups would there be without guitars, though? Groups without drums, it's passé."

But there's such a thing as a drum machine.

B — "Slim Jim, one of the few remaining live drummers!"

J — "I wasn't being sarcastic. Just-programme-me-and-I-will-play... That's what's missing today. The sticks... soul."

The thing that strikes me about you guys is that even though you obviously draw on the whole rockabilly style, you probably wouldn't be doing what you're doing today in just this way if the punk thing hadn't happened.

B — "People always knock — especially in England, they hate it when we say we like the punks, 'cause we have a lot of punks come to see us. But I mean, the punk things shook up a lot of people, got 'em off their ass, and although I don't like their music too much I liked the rebellion of the whole thing."

What about the Clash? I hear you're quite friendly with them.

J — "Oh, sure."

B — "They're alright."

What about musically?

B — "That's what I mean."

J — "Musically, I like about three or four tracks off a record."

But is three or four tracks enough?

B — "I've been very disappointed with them lately. I mean, I don't like the political thing. A couple of songs if you have political convictions is fine but to base a whole band around it... I think they're well over the top with it."

J — "I like their image. I like them more personally



than musically."

B — "I like things like Joe Ely; I like the Fabulous Thunderbirds (Now there's a man with taste), the Kingbees...I like bands that rock, y'know? Any good rockin' bands."

So what kind of an audience do you guys pull nowadays? Is it hardcore rockabilly, or do you get more of a cross-section?

J — "We really do now. In England we get Rockabillies, Teds, punks, a lot of punk girls come to see us, I don't know why — and just like, I guess what you would call normal kids...all kind of a mix, that's the way it is over there. In France I have to say it's exclusively rockers. They've got their rocker thing happening."

They still worship Gene Vincent over there.

J — "They should, as well. And they're making, like, new clothes...they're hip there."

Before we wrap this up I just want to hit you with something somebody (Teddy Fury of the Bopcats, as it happens) said to me not too long ago: "The reason the Stray Cats made it was because there was nothing happening in England at the time, they were cute (massed snickers), and they were American. Plus they could play."

B — "That sums it up."

J — "The last thing you said is the most important."

Okay, well, I'll see you tonight. I really don't think you'll have too much to worry about.

B — "I never worry, ever, about a show."

And that, friends, is about as good a segue as we're ever gonna get to the show itself. Like most of the shows worth seeing these days, it took place at the Concert Hall and was sold out well in advance, something of a surprise to a lot of people who thought that the Stray Cats' popularity had peaked over a year ago; I was kind of surprised myself, to tell the truth.

Anyway, after the usual preparatory libations we sauntered over to the gig, where opening act Johnny G was already in full swing. Johnny G is yet another in a long line of Great British Eccentrics; visions of Kevin Coyne, Snips, and latter-day Pete Townshend danced in my head, which was more action than was taking place on the floor. I guess that one's enjoyment of G's act depends on one's tolerance for Great British Eccentrics, and in my case that isn't very high unless your name happens to be Peter Perrett.

In any event, one didn't have to spend too much time within the confines of the Concert Hall before one obvious fact presented itself: GODITWA-SHOT!!! I mean, I don't mind getting a bit sweaty, but when it gets to the point where you're getting drenched in everyone else's; well, a man can only take so much. So out we went into the street (or across the street, to be more accurate) until it looked like time for the Stray Cats to appear. As we re-entered the Concert Hall the boys were already on stage tooling full-tilt through Rumble in Brighton, which, if it wasn't the first number, certainly ought to have been; even if it isn't really one of their primola numbers, it accurately captures the larger than life aura that surrounds the band on stage. Okay, so maybe they weren't born with massive quiffs cascading like Niagara Falls over their foreheads. But in performance they make it work. No question about it. At all. This was gonna be a hot one in more ways than one.

During the slow blues of *Drink That Bottle Down* (sung by Lee) the one and only fainter is passed up onto the stage. I'm surprised there weren't more; God only knows how hot it was up there in front. Meanwhile the band kept getting hotter. *Rock This Town* is maybe my favourite Stray Cats number (even if it does go on about a verse too long) and tonight they did it proud. *Runaway Boys* got the expected response, while the band's three Eddie Cochran numbers were fairly successful as well. Now, this guy's material has been done to death almost as much as a lot of Chuck Berry's (who has a much bigger catalogue), so it's gotten pretty difficult to breathe any life into one, never mind taking a shot at three. But *C'mon Everybody* was good, *My Way* hasn't been covered enough to get stale, and their version of *Somethin' Else* was fresher sounding than any I've heard in quite some time (despite an extension in length which made it drag unnecessarily toward the end). And if the band worked hard, so did the audience, who could hardly have been blamed if they had taken things a bit easier; after all, the band was being paid to sweat. But the initial fever-pitch frenzy kept up from start to finish, for a band and a fad who were both supposed to have peaked a long time ago. Something must be going on out there.

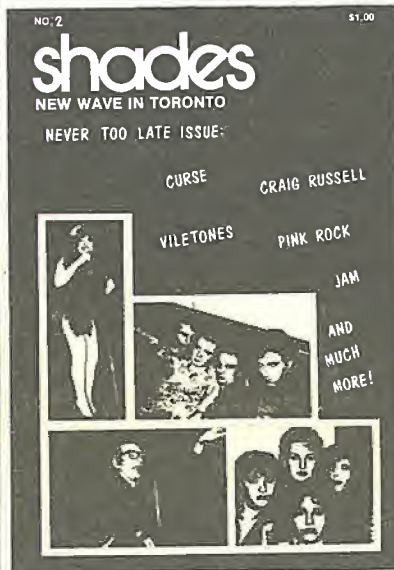
So there you are, you pays your money and you takes your choices. And your chances, I guess. As for me, I was well impressed. I hope they make it, whether because or in spite of their image I don't really care. Because it's about time we had something good on the radio again (and they are getting airplay, I've heard 'em), and something hipper than Dave Lee Roth on the cover of *Hit Parader*. Maybe then some of the "good rockin' bands" that Brian Setzer was mentioning might have a chance as well. Who knows, there might be life and a few new tricks in the old hound dog yet.

# shades

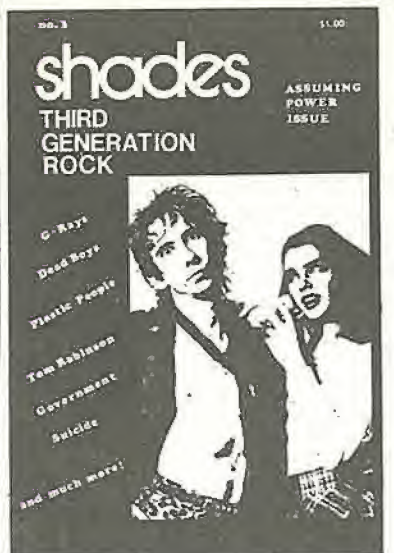
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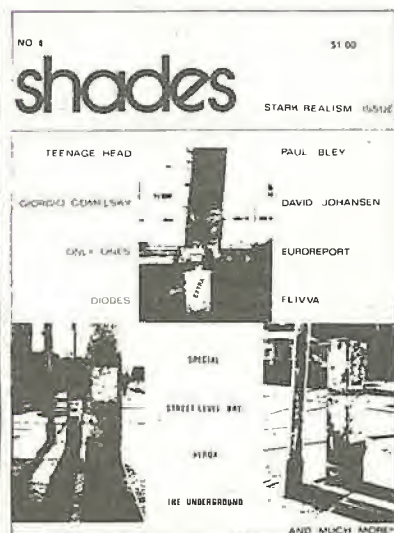
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No. 7 (Still Kicking)

Crazy Cavan, Flamin' Groovies, Gang of Four, Nico, Ugly Ducklings, Robert Fripp, Magazine Euroreport.

No. 8 (Last Lines and Fresh Parts)

Wayne County, Chris Cutler, Buzzcocks, Last Pogo Film, Peking Opera, Arson, Fashion, Members, Levi & the Rockats, Tom Waits.

No. 9 (Timely)

Nash the Slash, Ultravox, Time Twins, Wreckless Eric, D.O.A., Gerald Franklin, The Numbers, Sham 69, Waxmo Nariz, Twilight Women, Sona Vista.

No. 10 (Sex and Violence)

XTC, Biffs, Euroreport, Lene Lovich, Lounge Lizards, The Wonderful Grand Band, Gary Numar, Tom Walmesley, Steve Blimkie, Romantics, Police, Radio On, Plastic People of the Universe

No. 11 (Beauty and Beasts)

Madness, Speedies, Pearl Harbour and the Explosions, ZRO 4, Dickies, Martha Ontivero, Bruce Woolley, Japan, Newfoundland Report, Sylvain Sylvain, Daily Planet, This Heat, Al Neil.

No. 12 (Showtime)

Ramones, Willy Deville, Barry Andrews, Festival of Fools, Fred Frith, Drastic Measures, The Points, Tyranna, Cardboard Brains, Electra, Tourists, Dirty Looks, Newf Wave, Metal Boys, Modern Guy, Clichettes, Urban Verbs.

No. 13 (All Over)

The Great Rock and Roll Swindle Film, John Otway, The Sharks, Time Twins' Kiddies Show, Heat Wave, Sunburst (The Moonie Band), Philip Rambow, Cramps, X, Eurobands, Reggae Sunsplash, Joe "King" Carrasco.

No. 14 (Freudian Images)

The Plastics, Pyschedelic Furs, The Beat, Cinofrenic, Split Enz, Demics, Elton Motello, Enterprise 1990, Everglades, Rough Trade, Steven Lack, Richard Strange, Spoons, Magazine, Contractions, Only Ones, counterculture.

No. 15 (Trite, Tribal, Trivial)

Siouxsie and the Banshees, Michael Jordana, Stranglers, Slits, Crackwalker, Klo, Secret Fire, Doug and the Slugs, U2, Joan Jett, Moon Martin, The Roches, Plastic Bertrand, The Government, Marshall McLuhan.

No. 16 (Outlaws)

Daryl Hall, Pointed Sticks, David Ramsden, Toronto L.A., Ceramic Hello, Jim Carroll, Sector 27, Snips and Spedding, Beefheart, DNA, Villains, Prophets, Stiff Records, Minny Pops, Alegna Stark Gets a Job.

No. 17 (Repeat Business)

Adam and the Ants, Nash the Slash, John Martyn, Boomtown Rats, Robert Fripp, Reggae, The Extras, Echo and the Bunnymen, Bauhaus, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Simple Minds, Colin Newman, Wall of Voodoo, Twitch, Gruppo Sportivo.

No. 18 (Bare Necessities)

The Jam, CeeDee's, Rights of Spring, Stiff Little Fingers, Robert Fripp, Robert Gordon, Gang of Four, The Plastics, Girlschool, The Cockroach, Human Sexual Response, Urban Verbs, Jona Lewie

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Screamin Sam and the Problems, Carol Goss, Kraftwerk, Paper Door, Psychedelic Furs, The Cure, Allen Ginsberg, Voodoo, Revillos, Dusan Makaveyev, Split Enz, Killing Joke, Classix Nouveaux, John Cooper Clark, Georgie McDonlad, Georgie Fame, Pylon, Toby Swann

No. 21 (Visions Of...)

Martha and the Muffins, Ron Mann, Iggy Pop, OMITD, San Francisco: Dead Kennedys, Offs, Romeo Void, Snaefingers, Black Uhuru, Steve Reich, Men Without Hats, The Dice, Shakin' Pyramids, Clive Robertson

No. 22 (Have a Heart)

John Cage, Fergus Hambleton, Professionals, Simple Minds, Boys Brigade, Go Go's, Pretenders, Rockabilly: Sidewinders/ Bopcats/ Johnny Dee Fury, The Hummers, Wholly Communion, Bush Tetras

No. 23 (Cherchez La Fame)

Rockabilly: Johnny Dee Fury, Bopcats, Sidewinders; D. Ann Taylor (Hummers); Fun Boy Three, Flamin' Groovies, Canadian Images, Nion, Wally and Andre, Kinetic Ideals, Durutti Column, Fingerprintz, Tony Malone (Drastic Measures), Units, Western Region Reports

No. 24 (In-Security)

David Byrne, Chas Lawther (Chuck the Security Guard), Depeche Mode, The Spoons, Fugs: Ed Sanders, Tuli Kipferberg, Telephone, James "Blood" Ulmer, Teardrop Explodes, Dick Duck and the Dorks, Tuxedomoon, Pete Shelley, Panther Burns, Eugene Chadbourne, Plastic People of the Universe

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# MAXIMUM ROCK 'N' ROLL

Photos by Erich Mueller



Bad Posture



Clifford of M.A.D.



## The Dead Kennedys REGION REPORT: SAN FRANCISCO (AGAIN!) by Jennifer Waters

On August 13-14, at the fabulous On Broadway Nightclub, 18 bands in all played to celebrate the release of the new **Maximum Rock'n'Roll** compilation album — featuring 47 cuts by 47 bands. Skinheads, hardcore punks, and 15 year old high-school kids with mohawks came from all over California for the show-bands playing with names like **Free Beer**, **M.D.C. (Millions of Dead Cops)**, **Bad Posture**, and the already notorious **Dead Kennedys**.

There was more spontaneity, raw energy, and intensity present in the bands that played (who were mostly kids), than at the usual rock show — lyrics aimed more at the political situation in the United States and the world, and less at the more traditional rock subject: that girl who wronged them, who they love so much anyway.

**Crucifix**, from San Francisco, features a 17 year old singer, the son of Korean immigrants, and a boy who's not taking life lying down. The band takes the hardcore punk look to the point of ridicule, with spiked hair to the ceiling, dozens of spiked wrist bands, and ripped up clothes. No one can accuse them of making a bid for a WEA contract, whatever else they might be up to.

**M.A.D.**, the best hardcore band out of Santa Cruz, a dull resort/college town, came out with the unity of soldiers trained for combat in a terrorist army. Playing an ultra fast unified thrash beat, bobbing and weaving around the stage, and looking stronger than Fleetwood Mac, Judy Collins, and Paul McCartney all put together — who wants a cheerful love tune when your welfare just got cut off and there's not a job in sight?

**Social Unrest**, the headliners on Friday night, were the least bizarre in the way of conventional rock bands, even though that wasn't the intention. They've been plugging away at punk for some 2 or 3 years now, and by now can't help looking like they want some return besides a diversion from highschool. Their album's just been released, and punky looking **Social Unrest** posters are being mailed to all the right record stores.

Heavy metal goons **Bad Posture**, featuring a freakishly tall singer, played the second night of the show. Ludicrously fun, the singer spews jokes and commentary while the band beats each other up in the background. Behind their hard rock parody act, there is a healthy anti-strong drugs message — "Think you're cool/uhuh, you're a junkie fool/We think you're shit/Cause smack's not it" — that betrays their mindless hard rockers facade.

When the **Dead Kennedys** came onstage, headlining the second night, the audience swarmed

to the stage. Singer Biafra boomed into his mike: "This song is for everyone who's let their guidance counsellor and their parents tell them what to do, and been pigeon-holed right into a corner". The audience reacted by wildly thrashing around, diving off the stage, leaping into the air, and generally not acting like a passive drugged out mass.

Woodstock II I wouldn't call the whole affair, but nobody had mud smeared all over their drug infested bodies, either. Kids (and others) strolled around in their studied, ridiculous looks, skateboarding, sparechanging and, yes, paying attention to bands.

The event was in honor of the release of one of the best (and the most ambitious) compilations to date. The 47 bands on the album all come from the California/Nevada border area, and are indicative of the explosion of punk and hardcore music in every small dull town on the West Coast.

**Maximum Rock'n'Roll** was put together by two people who have willingly immersed themselves in the hardcore/punk scene: Timmy Yohannon, DJ at KPFA, and Jello Biafra, singer for the Dead Kennedys and compulsive record collector.

Bands, some of them on the verge of breaking up and with no hope of being recorded, sent in tapes to KPFA for airplay on their weekly punk show, **Maximum Rock'n'Roll Hour**. One song was picked from each tape, on the theory that every band has at least one really great song.

The groups selected were then forced to go into the studio to record the song, tuning in to the business aspect of the whole affair. Now a lot of the bands that were ready to break up are putting out their own EPs. Along with sending the finished cut in, each band sent in their own page of lyrics and design, and the different pages were all put together to make a magazine which is enclosed in each album.

"I think it's going to surprise a lot of people," says Yohannon, "They're not going to be able to write it off as one-two-three thrash music. There's poppy punk, hardcore, rockabilly, and garage music. I consider it to be rock'n'roll. We picked the songs with intelligent lyrics, that accentuate the political aspects of punk — a lot of people say we're too serious, but when the whole fucking world is going down the tubes how can you not be too serious?"

The album and enclosed magazine show a new, refreshingly active political thinking — "I go through a lot of doubts sometimes," says Yohannon, "and wonder what percentage of punks are idiots; but when you do meet kids who really do give a shit it makes it worthwhile — they're on the ball."

Already, they inform me, there is more than enough material for a second album.



Dirk Dirksen, Jello Biafra: "Drink up and get out!"



# REVIEWS

## RECORDINGS

### SONGS FOR FALL

**Ben Watt — Everything But The Girl — Fibonacci — OH OK Chrome Dinette — Appliances — Pulsallama — Contractions**

Ben Watt's five song ep *Summer Into Winter* (Cherry Red) is a record of almost idyllic beauty, built on the combination of his echoing guitar and expressive lead vocals with Robert Wyatt's playful piano and unmistakable harmonies. Three of the five cuts are particularly successful: *Walter And John* is a story of childhood friendship betrayed, *Another Conversation With Myself* is a snippet of solo piano by Watt and *A Girl In Winter* is a lovely emotional love ballad sung by Watt alone in a breathless rush. Ben Watt is also one half of the Everything But The Girl duo, the other being Tracy Thorn of the Marine Girls. Watt obviously loves to sing harmony and he got together with Thorn to make this one-off single just to see how their voices would blend. They sound just fine, although I'd advise you to avoid the first side which is a harmless but unnecessary version of Cole Porter's *Night And Day*, and listen instead to the two songs on the back. *Feeling Dizzy* is another good Watt composition and *On My Mind* is a fine song that Thorn wrote for the Marine Girls. It's also on Cherry Red.

According to their press kit the Fibonacci got their name from an Italian mathematician, Leonardo de Pisa, who was nicknamed Fibonacci. No attempt is made to explain why. The **Fibonacci**

### DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T...

A lot of the time I don't listen to records. When I do they can tend to be things with predictable pleasures, either because they are long and well-known (to me, anyway) or what I find the best of a general type.

It's a rare, special pleasure when something comes in from the cold, cold deluge of standard releases and joins the small stock of what I play repeatedly. Often enough, these are things that the rest of the world seems to know and care less of, largely because they are on some small label and/or they're not hyped. Telling a few of you that they exist — well, that sounds like a job description of SHADES.

You may notice that I do it sparingly. Primarily, that is because very few stand my two standard tests of a record's real merit: I myself lust to hear it, more than just a few times and for more than a brief, passing fancy's duration. And I play it for others of different persuasions as much as I can. In the past few months, three have joined the collection.

One has been there a while. In fact it was around, sort of lost in the shuffle, until for some reason I started to play it obsessively at about the same time as the soundtrack to *Once Upon the Time In The West* and *Social Studies* (Carla Bley). There is no necessary connection; except maybe the balance acquired by some variations on what I think "good". The record is called **Music, Music, Music** and it's on the New Hormones label, from Manchester, England (50 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 2EA, and you may need to know that). The band is called Dislocation Dance, and that's about all that you learn from the cover, outside of the names of its — yes — fourteen cuts. Among which there isn't a bad one and a few that have burrowed their pleasant, implacable way into permanent grooves, aka aural necessities. I don't know how hard it will be to find this one, but if you're a fan of the new English funk you should try. Or, on the other hand, if you're not and you're also not sure that you do like James Chance and Kid Creole that much after all. Dislocation Dance is all over the place in this rapid-fire, keep-em-short album, which in effect you could call a collection. It's more Latin than funk; more pop-carnival upbeat than strict avant-garde. And it has solid pleasures like melodies, words and a layered production that doesn't obscure any pithy, placed feature. It's the kind of record that makes me keep wondering just how much is out there as yet undiscovered, that makes me feel grateful that some of it finds its way into my keeping; that, in short, keeps the faith I must have to do (even) this much. Just when it's most shaken by all of the latest in dance, dance, don't think; synth-pop-gone-sentimental; and/or Beauty and Tribal Beat wonders.

From another side of the musical spectrum, and also the world via both Jamaica and Seattle, Washington, comes another obscure (but not obscurantist) delight on Palace of Lights. Called **Land of Look Behind**, this one's a soundtrack includ-

seven song mini-lp is on Index records and the only band they can be realistically compared to are their Index label mates Wall Of Voodoo, and even that is more a similarity of feel, than anything else. They are exotic, literate, occasionally inscrutable (*Rice Song*, for instance, is sung entirely in Korean) and not by any stretch of the imagination could they be termed commercial. Still, it's a jaded ear indeed that wouldn't enjoy the immensely charming instrumental *Sergio Leone* that opens the record. I think I prefer Wall Of Voodoo but it will be interesting to hear what the Fibonacci come up with next.

OH OK are from that hotbed of intrepid experimenters, Athens, Georgia. Four short songs are on their debut mini-lp, a seven inch on DB, and there is an odd childlike quality to them, a feeling which is reinforced by the single's jacket drawings showing the three band members as toddlers. The instrumentation is simple (just bass and drums), and the tunes are not too complex either. But that doesn't mean they are without thought, particularly in the song called *Person* with its forthright declaration, "I am a person / And that is enough."

Chrome Dinette are a three piece from San Francisco and their sound is dance-club style mixed with soul. Their compositions are copyrighted to something called Techno-Soul, and that's a fairly good description. With one of the songs on their twelve inch single (Post Atomic records) that sound comes across as a little too cool and forced to

ing some outtakes from a film I can't really imagine but would sure like to see. I suppose since they're there, I could use terms like ambient, soundscape or dub-synthesized for the record. And I could compare it to work with "found sound", as in **My Life in the Bush of Ghosts**, since it uses location recordings and vocal material — most effective are two tracks based on the Nya Binghi of up-country Jamaica. But none of this quite hits the point that the thing is a jewel that would beggar comparisons with either a) what it starts from, Jamaican culture itself and b) how it proceeds, which is awfully like Eno and Byrne, Robert Fripp, a few others. It is, to be sure, "atmospheric" and whooshy, as the (very few) other reviewers have said. And it's "dense, polyrhythmic, evocative" too. Even "haunting and dreamlike". What it isn't is boring, self-conscious or precious. It's also not loud. You can let it drift in and out of attentions, or get up and dance (and I don't mean just swaying; you can stretch to it, stomp to it, do those slow sit-ups that practically kill you). It's an anytime, all-purpose record that's made me want all this small label's releases — to date 7 with two more expected, all more or less supervised or produced by the man who did **Land of Look Behind** and an earlier thing called **Closed System Potentials**. I do have one other PoL album I don't like as much, called **Regional Zeal**, which after less than a full chance I filled under *Wish It Had Worked*. Which means something like great title, good idea ("Mouth Music") and some really fun tracks overwhelmed by the self-indulgent, hey-listen-to-me-I'm-an-artist. In spite of this relative failure — which looked at another way is in about equal parts a success — I'm convinced Kerry Leimer, his studio, PoL, and Tactical Distribution (P.O. Box 4141, Seattle, WA, USA 98104) are worth searching out. It's much more than "potential" I'm hearing. I think the guy's really important. He just could be a genius (if, for example, you think Brian Eno and some more anonymous dub-masters are). What's more, scrawled on a Xeroxed review, that they sent me, was this information from PoL/Tactical: "born in Winepegi!" (sic). So he's even in some sense CanCon. You know, like Neil Young, Malcolm Lowry, The Band...

Finally, somewhere between these and also quite different, is the **Penguin Cafe Orchestra** album, on Polygram via EG. This record is harder than most to describe, so I won't. But one thing that interests me is that it balances somehow the methods/effects of a project largely conceived, produced and executed by one man (this time Simon Jeffes, who's worked with Rupert Hine and Sid Vicious, The Sex Pistols and Bow Wow Wow) and by a collective, The Orchestra, which is described as "a loose association of members who erratically visit the cafe to talk, sit, play, and when appropriate, record music." The music and instrumentation are wildly eclectic, including a dulcitone, rubber band, penny whistle, accordion and cuatro as well as violin, oboe, etc. It's not strictly classical, rock, jazz or folk. It is tuneful and rhythmic and sort of uplifting. The Penguin Cafe is

be successful, but the other song called *Can't Live Without You* is a gem. Nice variety of instruments, including electric viola, synthesizers, guitars, drums and synaeres.

The Appliances are a more established San Francisco band and I talked to two of their members there a few months back. The tapes that they played me then are out as a record now and it's a good effort. The sticker on the front of their twelve inch ep says the music in *Punk Funk Rap*; I'm not too sure how much rap there is here but the punk funk is very evident. Also the political stance, which is dark and bleak. Best song is *Paranoia Rap* in which all the parts fit together perfectly and carry you along to the song's conclusion. All the other cuts have interest, from *Death Squad* with its El Salvador message to the William Burroughs influenced *Cease To Exist* and the nightmarish *Jonny*, but none of them are as satisfying, as complete, as *Paranoia Rap*. It's worth noting too that the Appliances (with a slightly different line-up) were recording newer material back in March and to my ears it sounded even more intriguing than the music on this release. Hopefully those tapes will make it onto vinyl soon.

Depending on which press statement you believe, there are either ten, eleven or twelve women in Pulsallama. What is definite is that they are from New York and were formed out of that city's Ladies' Auxiliary. Their first single, a twelve inch on Y America, contains one of their best songs called *The Devil Lives In My Husband's Body*, which is five minutes or so of wit, rhythm and acute social comment. They make you laugh and they make you dance. I can't wait for a recorded version of their song *What's My Name* which goes "What's

described as "more a state of mind than a physical space", though in fact there are several; one in Japan and another in Britain created by drummer Mick Karn (of Japan, the band). Simon Jeffes has been quoted as saying "this music could be described as imaginary folklore — drawing not on national but global influences, an attempt at creating a contemporary music for the heart of our own time and culture." It's the kind of statement that makes me suspicious. But this time it works as a simple description of an album both varied and strangely cohesive, with cuts ranging from *Air à*

### SHORTCUTS

**Words From The Front** — Tom Verlaine — WEA  
**Wise Guy** — Kid Creole et al — Sire/ZE  
**Night and Day** — Joe Jackson — A&M  
**Big Science** — Laurie Anderson — Warner Bros.  
**Glassworks** — Phillip Glass — CBS Masterworks

Tom Verlaine is one of those characters that is every bit as entertaining as he is enigmatic. Beginning his solo career with an album that was a critical if not a commercial success didn't exactly endear him to the record company at the time. Indeed, Elektra's decision to drop him has to be one of the fastest on record.

Cool heads prevailed, however, with WEA having the sense to keep him in the corporate fold if not on the same label. **Dreamtime**, the belated follow-up, was an album of masterful moments interspersed with absolutely forgettable tunes.

**Words from the Front** continues in the same vein. The guitar playing is top notch; Verlaine is one of a handful of new performers who belie the new truth that the future belongs to synthesizers.

When Verlaine is good, he's more than just another guitar hero. But when he's bad, he's just plain ignorable. Part of the problem, perhaps the *raison d'être*, is that **Words** is self-produced. For instance, the title track could have been one of the better anti-war songs of the new cold war era if it weren't for the trudging bottom and clichéd solos, played with such heavy-handedness as to be cut from granite, that detract from rather than enhance the sparse but succinct lyric.

Similarly, *Postcard From Waterloo* and *Present Arrived* are well composed lyrics in search of a melody. It's not all a lost cause, though. Three songs stand out sufficiently to save **Words From the Front** from being an entirely misguided effort. Whether they justify the excesses and indulgences of the other songs is a debatable matter.

There's an edge to *True Story*, with its psychotic bass drone and sharp-as-scissors lead that makes for some menacing if not outright dangerous music. *Clear It Away*, which finishes off the first side, uses the old standby rhythm section of Jay Dee Daugherty on drums and Fred Smith on bass.

Verlaine is at his best, though, on *Days on the Mountain*, an extended (it's almost 9 minutes long) song with a haunting lyric. Picking and bending notes like a latter day Wes Montgomery, Verlaine's austere playing is complemented by

my name / Pulsallama / if you don't like it / Go fuck a llama."

It took the Contractions almost two years to issue a follow up to their original single but the wait was well worth it in my opinion, an opinion which I freely admit is heavily prejudiced in their favor since there is no band I care about more than the Contractions. No matter how often I try it's impossible for me to write a standard descriptive review of this; the best I can do is tell you that the song *Don't Blame It On Me* is punchy and mainstream-radio-oriented and has a great vocal from writer Kim Morris that totally suits the warmth of the song, and that the other side is *Breaking Up Is Not Hard To Do* by Mary Kelley, an old live favorite that is loud, jagged, emotional and features Kelley's freewheeling guitar work complete with a burst of whining feedback at the end. I could write a book about the Contractions. If I did (which is unlikely, you'll be relieved to hear) it would focus on the single outstanding strength of the many that they can claim — the fact that in Kelley, Morris and Kathy Peck they have three singer/songwriters who are capable of leading a band centered around their specific compositional and vocal talents. I once said that the Contractions were a good example of affirmative action at work. They make that more obvious to me every time I see them. Judging from the new material they were performing at a typically enthusiastic, compelling live show in New York this summer, the Contractions are only going to get better. Maybe I will get to write that book after all. If you have trouble finding the single locally write to Q'n'D Records, P.O. Box 40515 San Francisco Calif. U.S.A. 94140.

Mark Leach

Danser, to *Telephone and Rubber Band* to *The Ecstasy of Dancing Fleas* to a wonderful version of *Walk Don't Run*. If your mood isn't always frenetic then check this one out.

And it could be that I'm slowing down. Again, or at least for a while. I haven't been able to get past the covers of such things as **Warhead**, **Compendium Maleficarum**, **The Lords of The New Church**. It would seem that it isn't (another) angry new faith I've been looking for. Lately. About some things you're just on your own.

Sheila Wawanash

drummer Allan Schwartzberg's minimalist rhythm. Add Lene Lovich on sax — unlike any sax playing I can recall — and it makes for majestic music. Simple but uneasy.

When all is said and writ, however, **Words From The Front** will be remembered as a stepping stone, a mere pathway on the side of the road leading to a greater guitar nirvana; the ultimate guitar album. Of this I have confidence. It just didn't happen this time around.

When last we heard from the crew of the banana boat, they were taking on water off the Brindisi reef.

It was one boat I can't say I was sorry to see go down.

Now, however, the survivors have escaped the Island of sinners to tell the world their tale of being forced to play "race" music to obtain their passport to freedom.

For the most part, it should have been revoked.

Don't get me wrong, the rhythms of **Wise Guy** are, like certain social diseases, infectious. Sufficiently so as to be funkier than, say, some of the super-funk bands such as Earth, Wind and Fire, the Commodores or Talking Heads, for that matter.

But that also seems to be the problem, or at least a good part of it. There's a sense of cockiness about the funk between the grooves that suggests more than just a hip bunch of guys and gals hanging around, playing Latino. Certainly, it's energetic. (It makes for good generic dancing music to while away a hot summer's night.) And, yes, it's often witty. Yet repeated listenings only reaffirm the initial feeling that **Wise Guy** is pretty good lounge funk. That is to say hi-gloss cute.

It's telling that the best track on the album, *Imitation*, is appropriately titled; with horns just as tight as the Muscle Shoals or Tower of Power sections and a guitar line that snakes through a lazy Mexican rhythm, the Kid sings: "Some people live off other people's dreams/reciting lines in someone else's scene."

He should know.

It's easy enough to label Joe Jackson a musical chameleon, considering his progress from angry young man on **Look Sharp** to angry young man with a conscience on **Beat Crazy** to the war vet on permanent shore leave of his last album, **Jumping Jive**.

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With **Night and Day**, it's almost as if he were part of a lounge act in some non-descript bar in midtown Manhattan, he plays the role so well.

Sure, it's easy to label him. But not only has Jackson improved and progressed with the changes but he has matured as well. He is, and I venture to predict will continue to be, one of the finest singer-songwriters to flourish in the 80's.

**Night and Day** isn't as black and white as the title suggests. It is, however, very good rock 'n' roll music played in a lounge setting. (One that you could say proves there is a future in rock without synthesizer and/or guitar oriented bands.) The anger and the pessimism are still there. Indeed, he hits the mark with uncanny accuracy in his songs dealing with the decay and decadence of urban living; take a listen to *Chinatown* with its entirely appropriate tribal beat; or *Target* with its vocal harmonies straight out of the CS&N catalogue that makes getting mugged sound like a pleasure.

But there's also a sense of hope and optimism throughout the tracks. Things may be bad, but they can't get any worse, as on *Steppin Out* and *Another World*, the latter a sort of Cuban bluegrass.

There isn't really a bad track on the album, though some are of course better than others. Two of the better ones are *Cancer*, a subliminal message song, and *Real Men*, which has absolutely nothing to do with quiche. Jackson does a bit of sermonizing on *TV Age*, a clever piece done in a conversational style — requisite for all those who talk back to their sets.

No doubt, there will not be a "Night and Day II" given Jackson's propensity for planned obsolescence. Besides, he'll be too busy doing his chameleon routine — thankfully.

Laurie Anderson has seen the future — and it is neither promising nor pretty, despite the description of *Golden Cities (and) Golden Towns* in **Big Science**.

It's a future of Simon Says and unquestioning reaction; "Good evening. This is your Captain/We are about to attempt a crash landing."

It's a future that does have a sense of humour

## TORONTOSAURUS REX: FALLING BEHIND

Marianne Girard, **When It Hurts**, Sailor Records (Sail 2002)

If she'd been born ten years earlier, Marianne Girard might have gone the folkie road; three years from now she might be doing cabaret. But for the moment — luckily for us — she's chosen rock and roll, and this record is the result. When I first listened to it I found it, well, problematic. There was something in the lyrics that I couldn't relate to. Then after two weeks of listening to some of the local rock stations, as well as wading through the rising tide of heavy metal/hard rock pollutants that are posing as Canada's gift to the world, I came back to **When It Hurts**, and it was like walking into an oasis after two weeks in the desert.

The album is a lush, energetic reggae-flavoured collection of rock ballads that are both intelligent and strongly emotional. Girard has a warm, full voice that is as unique and personal as the banshee castrati of heavy metal are uniform and anonymous. And what she sings about is at least comprehensible. As far as I can tell, Girard is trying to articulate an area of experience that is easily forgotten in the cold war of the sexes that is going on under the mantle of "liberation". She is a woman who is hurt by the men she loves, but instead of crying in pain, turning twisted or bitter, she tries, with a good deal of compassion and pluck, to make the men see the damage they are doing, not only to her but to themselves. Girard evidently loves men, but their emotional illiteracy gets her down. She is working with strong musicians and she pushes out her post amour dramas with real conviction. She deserves to do well.

The Diodes, **Survivors**, Fringe Product (FR 3003)

This Diodes' retrospective is a gem. With "never before released" tracks stretching back to 1977, when John Hamilton was playing and writing with them, the album is a fresh reminder of some of the best music to come out of that largely imitative punk milieu in Toronto a few years back, when the essential ingredients of the aesthetic were a few basic chords, lots of volume and high-tension lyrics. The survivors of that period were those with ability and ambition, and the Diodes had plenty of both, which made their music stand out. What is interesting in this collection is that it balances a few judiciously selected covers (Eric Burdon's *When I Was Young* and the Stone's *Play With Fire*, recorded live at the Horseshoe) with original material that reveal John Catto and Paul Robinson as a song-writing team with great promise. *Rose and Thorns*, by Catto, is a beautiful song no matter what your musical preferences are, and I don't hesitate to recommend the record to anyone interested in the Toronto scene, or for that matter to anyone simply interested in good, gutsy rock and roll.

that's not all that absurd, as on *From The Air*. But it's a future that's marked by its failures, whether they be in personal relationships (*Sweaters*) or technological (*Big Science* and *O Superman*).

While I can't say that I like all the songs on **Big Science**, there is enough here to warrant more than a few repeated listenings. Yes, I'd go as far as to say that there's enough meat here to prove that the "debut" ep *O Superman* wasn't a fluke. (Notably missing from the album is *Walk The Dog*, the wonderfully tongue-in-cheek country b-side to *O Superman*.)

What really appeals though, and I'd suggest it would be applicable to those whose idea of "new" music or "avant-garde" is the latest release from Human League, is that it need not be heard as strange emanations randomly accompanying free associations. The instrumentation might seem strange; I usually associate bagpipes with Scottish marching bands. And, too, the lyrics; *Let X=X* isn't exactly an everyday title to a love song.

The future may not be pretty nor promising, but undoubtedly it will include Laurie Anderson and her accessible "avant-garde" music.

Finally, an album that should give "beautiful music" a good name. Quite simply, **Glassworks** is an aurally luscious indulgence of the nicest kind. It's the kind of music you throw on after having your brain bashed by one too many bass drums and too much beer.

In six parts, **Glassworks** is a continuous piece of ebb and flow that isn't exactly like the overlapping pulsations of Steve Reich, but isn't too far from it either. From the lead piano solo of *opening* through to the end of *closing*, there is a feeling of serenity, an atmosphere of tranquility about this work.

Indeed, the music is often so quiet that the appropriately titled *Rubric* stands out as the most animated of the passages, with its horns reminiscent of Haydn's famous concerto. It is both regal and yet, and I don't think paradoxically, quite relaxing.

Still, this is the kind of music that's so "simple" it's too dangerous for the program directors who rule the airwaves.

Rob Taylor

The Bopcats, **Wild Jungle Rock**, Attic Records (LAT 1139)

With the addition of Jack DeKeyser on lead guitar and Zeke Rivers on bass, the Bopcats have tightened up their music and are at last putting out songs that have an energy more in tune with the kind of music they are emulating. As well as playing a solid guitar, DeKeyser displays song-writing talent. *Lucky Me*, a catchy, pop-oriented C&W number, is my favorite and I hope they try to mine more music from that vein, since it seems to suit all their talents well. On the whole, it's a far more convincing LP than their first, although they still seem to be spreading themselves too thin over too wide a range of styles, as though they're not really sure, even yet, of what kind of band they are. This uncertainty comes through very strongly in the cover design, a tacky pink background covered with tattoo parlour images of luck and the the band, with their outrageous coifs, in an array of artificial poses. As their music gets better, this all seems even more unnecessary.

54-40, **Selection**, Mo-Da-Mu

This is a young Vancouver band that gives you a very different picture of West Coast music than you get from some of the more prominent bands from that region. The music on this record has a brooding quality to it, something like Czech underground rock crossed with Eurobeat, but played on real instruments — I mean bass, guitar and drums, with the occasional addition of a horn section. The music on this 6-song EP is based on recurring patterns, and it is sparsely melodic and very cleanly executed. Some of it is danceable, some of it not. Alex Varty of the **Georgia Straight** claims that live, they are "good enough to pin you to the wall with waves of emotional incandescence", but **Selection** is decidedly cooler and less overpowering than that. The lyrics hint at a kind of meaning or mood, but sound more like the fragmentary notes a poet might write himself. To paraphrase the opening line of the title cut, they have tried, but not yet arrived. An interesting band that has a more accessible side to it, as displayed in a new West Coast compilation reviewed below.

Rational Youth, *I Want to See the Light*, b/w *Coboloid Race*, YUL Records, (12 Yul 2) (12" EP)

— *City of Night* (Dance Mix) b/w *Cité phosphore* and *Power Zone*, YUL Records, (12 YUL 3)

— **Cold War Night Life**, YUL Records, (YULP 1)

Rational Youth is a synthesizer band from Montréal that writes very melodic pop songs with a strongly rhythmic texture. The elements of their sound are predictable — baroque-flavoured key-board lines over the whip-lash thump and sizzle of a rhythm synthesizer and a bass line bumping up and down in octaves. They're bright, but a little robotic, as though they haven't yet been able to find a way — if there is one — to make graceful,

muscle-and-blood music with synthesized sounds. Their songs make up for this by creating a haunting and hypnotic atmosphere that suggests a generation trying to come to terms, as cheerfully as possible, with what amounts to a death sentence hanging over the species. *Dancing on the Berlin Wall*, the final track on their LP **Cold War Night Life**, is suggestive of their general attitude, and *Saturdays in Silesia*, from the same record, indicates an ability to sympathise with the plight of the working stiff regardless of what side of the Communist/Capitalist divide he toils on. Their music prompts a question, however. What is it about synthesizer music that seems to inspire its practitioners to sound like prophets of the future, whatever they think it might be like? Is it the attitude that attracts them to the technology, or does the technology inspire the attitude? Whatever the answer is, Rational Youth seem like one of the more humane practitioners of the art.

Blue Peter, **Up to You**, Ready (ER 025)

Never one of my favorite bands, even back when they were still playing the Turning Point, Blue Peter have come out with a new six-song EP (is it a sign of the recession that more and more records are really only half-records?) that is in fact a five-song EP, since the last cut is a repeat of the title song stripped of the lead vocals. On this record, Blue Peter have beefed out a rather dull and unimaginative set of songs with a big-band sound using lots of arranged horns and a galaxy of guest musicians. I think I'd feel happier about the band if their lyrics were a little more on-target. Also, their efforts to become the Guy Lombardos of rock would be commendable if they were prepared to put up a live show using all those guest artists. Until they do, I think it's fair to consider them a band that is trying to make up in production what it lacks in invention.

David Roberts, **All Dressed Up...**, Elektra (XEI 60127)

David Roberts is the product, I would guess, of solid musical ability shaped by years of listening to mainstream, why-don't-we-do-it-in-the-middle-of-the-road-pop. After winning a radio-sponsored song-writing contest in Toronto, he is shunted through a series of interlocking deals that land him a contract with Elektra/Asylum and has Diana Ross singing one of his songs. The album was cut in LA with world-class session men (whatever that means) and, to believe the PR, the lad is a genius poised on the brink of world fame.

Perhaps that's why, on the cover of this record, he looked a little like Cinderella after a hard night at the ball — minus those glass slippers. So far, everything about this record suggests a magic wand made of rolled up greenbacks. Roberts himself reminds me most — in his singing — of someone called Gilbert O'Sullivan, a crooner from several years back who made it into the MOR charts with a sweet voice and a sophisticated marketing campaign. Roberts may have more natural talents at his disposal, but I have a feeling that the unspoken half of his album title says it all. When you start out at the top, you have nowhere to go but...

Q 107 **Homegrown Vol. 4**, Basement Records (Base X6008)

**The Circuit**, Chameleon Records, (CR 555)  
**Things Are Still Coming Ashore**, Mo-Da-Mu Records (MDM 3)

Q 107's compilation, subtitled "The Sounds of Toronto", makes it difficult to judge anything but the taste of the people who selected these eleven "top" bands, headed by this year's winner **Oliver Heavyside**. It is astounding that, with one cut per group, the record has less musical variety than the average album by a single group with a little imagination. There is a lot of talent on the record, but little originality. Albums like this are the best argument I know of for legislating radio stations out of the production and promotional end of pop music. Not, heaven forbid, to limit their profits, but simply to prevent them from stifling originality in the name of a self-serving "popularity".

For another approach, try Chameleon's **The Circuit**, produced and compiled by veteran anthologist Tom Atom. Here the record represents individual, not corporate taste, and with only six bands represented, it means that all but one get two tracks to showcase their music. And there is far more variety here, from some sombre but interesting and musically dense tracks by **Glamatron** to more conventional rock, some of it verging on HM. And while I have to confess that nothing on the record really excited me, it's not difficult to recognize the presence of an ingredient entirely missing from the Q 107 compilation: integrity. Atom is sincerely interested in the bands he is promoting, and if real Canadian popular music is going to storm the world, he is pointing to one way it might do this without losing its soul on the way.

The final compilation represents a third approach to anthologizing music — an attempt to represent a scene rather than a city. As a result, **Things Are Still Coming Ashore** from Vancouver is the most interesting of the three because you can sense behind it the existence of a community of musicians. All three bands (four tracks each)

share some features: simple instrumentation (basically guitar, bass & drums), simple arrangements, and a somewhat monotonous, declamatory vocal style that adds a strange sense of ominousness to the music, even though it is occasionally difficult to determine what they're singing about.

**Animal Slaves**, at first listen, are the most accessible of the lot in that they stay more or less within the idioms of pop music, but the production makes it clear they think of themselves as outsiders.

54-40 is represented by four tracks that show the emotional, danceable side of their music better than their more cerebral EP (see above). *Anxious Moments* and *Long Goodbye* both insinuate themselves into your memory after a couple of listens, and are excellent pop songs as well as being refreshingly unusual — something like what Kinetic Ideals may have aspired to do on their first EP.

The third band, **Junco Run**, comes up with sound textures and riffs that are well within the range of rock music but seem to be coming from a sensibility and an experience that is well beyond pop. There is a classical, elegaic mood about the songs, as though they were laments for human error and fallibility.

If you are interested in local anthologies, I recommend checking this compilation out. It's available, along with the 54-40 EP, from Mo-Da-Mu at Box 374-810 W. Broadway, Vancouver BC.

Coney Hatch, **Coney Hatch**, Anthem.

Anthem has had the gall to send Torontosaurus Rex a promotional sampler of their latest great white hope. The PR for the band is incredibly tacky. Each of the four songs on this EP is introduced by verbal blurbs from Kim Mitchell, ex-Max Webster. Here's a sample of his rap: "By now your office should be full of people and if it's not, turn up your stereo. These suburban monsters deserve an audience, and you're the person who can give it to them." Elsewhere, Mitchell describes the band as having "an amazing sense of creative and commercial awareness." This kind of hype tells you far more about the marketing than it does about the music, and statements like "all melody and malice" tell you that they aim to position this band solidly astride the hard rock/heavy metal dichotomy. But if Anthem wants a review of the music out of me, they'll have to send a real record.

## Cassette Corner

**Alien Nation**, produced by Peeter Sepp.

This tape documents an ongoing project that reeks of Marshall McLuhan and Timothy Leary — rediscovered. The (poorly recorded) record of what appears to be a jam-session of non-musicians, I cannot see how this tape would be of interest to anyone except the participants. It is, however, shored up by a lot of rhetoric about music being the "ideal mode of communication" that can cross all cultural barriers, etc., all of it familiar enough stuff, including the plan to broadcast the tape "to our colleagues on earth and to any beings who might be monitoring the planet". Well, Torontosaurus Rex is monitoring the planet, and I can tell you that primal sludge of this kind is what, for eons, we've been working at — to crawl out of.

## Overacting

They once called themselves **The Biffs**, they gloried in the tackiness of their Scarborough origins and tried to parlay the atmosphere of the suburban sock-hop into the next big thing in Canadian pop. Now the Biffs' hard core (Chris Langstroth, Scott Lewis and Erik Wainio) have formed a conceptual rock group that, according to its own PR, has hung a U-Turn and is now reporting on the bleakness of those same (sub)urban wastelands. It reminds me somewhat of early Talking Heads and while I don't find it that interesting as music, **Overacting** are to be commended for their imaginative use of the cassette format — limited, numbered editions, real photos in each pack and a neatly folded set of lyrics. It's a group that I think is genuinely searching for a way to express their concerns honestly.

## Torontosaurus Rex

**Other Records Received** (reviews may follow next issue).

Moev, **Rotting Geraniums**, Go! Records (45 12" EP)

The Extras, **The Road to Zambando**, Ready (LR 022)

Knife Edge, **Erotike**, Pinned Records (PIN 82330001 a/b)

The Cry, **Guilty Fingers**, RCA

Pretty Rough, **Pretty Rough**, RCA

The Good Brothers, **Person to Person**, Solid Gold Records

Mark Hasselback, **Solar Winds**, Polydor.

SanTERS, **Mayday**, Ready (12" EP)

Toronto, **Get It On Credit** Solid Gold Records

Headpins, **Turn It Up Loud**, Solid Gold Records

Chain Reaction, **X-Rated Dream**, Attic FM, **Black Noise**, Passport Records

Cham Pang, YUL Records (12 YUL 1)



# PERFORMANCE/EVENTS

## ON THE TOWN by Paul Wilson

I was lucky enough to catch **Danny Marks** at **Grossman's** this July. Not that a Danny Marks gig is a rarity in Toronto, but I'd never seen him before and was impressed.

Marks is a superb, encyclopedic cover musician (although some of his strongest material, like *This House*, is original) and he rides the range of pop guitar styles like a seasoned old cowpoke, laid back and totally in control. In addition, Marks has a dry wit and a wry sense of fun, and he breathes so much life into the "classics" that you feel you've discovered the old songs all over again.

The second night I was there, he was warming up a new drummer, and during the obligatory request session, some cruel wag asked for *Wipe-out*. The drummer took a couple of deep breaths and then delivered a flawless, machine-gun version of the song that set him, and the audience, up for the rest of the evening.

Marks figured in another event, early in August — a private screening in the **Isabella** of some video tapes made around town by **Michael McNamara** of Cable 10. The feature of the evening was a piece called *The Jam*, shot (in the face of a lot of flak from the musicians union and the LLBO) at one of Marks' famous Saturday afternoon jam sessions in the Lower East Side room.

*The Jam* falls somewhere between a promo film for the *Izzy* and a really interesting document of one of Toronto's genuine scenes where musicians, both amateur and professional, can get together and play with and for each other. Among the more than half-dozen bands featured on the tape, there are a lot of good surprises, including a very unusual set by Mike McDonald and Pat Rush, and a steamy rocker by C.J. Feeny, who plays his guitar on his lap and frets it with his left thumb hooked over the neck. There was also a very funny sequence in which Danny Marks "wings it" with blues singer Michael Pickett, who indicates the chord changes to the band with prearranged finger signals throughout. The tape's only flaw was the PR-ish tone imparted to it in some of the interviews. It would have been more interesting if Marks had talked to the musicians about their music instead of reiterating what was obvious anyway; that the Saturday jams are a great institution and the *Izzy* is

to be commended for putting them on.

There were other tapes shown that evening too. One was a funny, if somewhat amateurish Kafkaesque nightmare fantasy starring **Ben Cleveland** that climaxes when the hero is attacked in his room by three punkette weirdos who pin him to the floor and cram junk-food down his throat while he writhes in helpless torment. I assume this has nothing whatsoever to do with Cleveland's position as drummer in a couple of women's bands around town.

Other shorts, originally produced by McNamara for Cable 10's regular fortnightly feature *Metro Focus 90*, included **The Four Horsemen**, a team of performance poets (bp Nichol, Rafael Barreto-Rivera, Paul Dutton and Steve McCaffery) who do ensemble readings that frequently suggest an avant-garde jazz quartet performing without instruments before a mirror. There was also a funny sketch by a comedy team called **The Norm** using puppets from the Popeye strip to get off some well-aimed barbs at Cabbagetown renovationist chic (The Norm were recently booed off the stage at a gathering of Toronto's literary and journalistic elite when they performed their "Brian Linehan Interviews Adolf Hitler" routine, which is all very well, except that you know that the same crowd would have found nothing offensive in an "interview" with Joe Stalin. Is there something sacred about Adolf?). The other interesting tape in this sequence was the **CeeDee's** playing two of their songs (Driedger's *I Want to be Somebody* and Cameron's *Gdansk*). The tape features Bucky Berger on drums, and is a rare visual document of a wonderful combination of musicians that unfortunately is no longer. The tape might have been improved by better sound, and by withdrawing the focus somewhat from Driedger and Cameron. *Gdansk*, for example, would have come across on video more powerfully if the director had intercut shots of the band with, for example, visuals of people eating their lunch in Nathan Phillip's Square, but I'm picking nits here.

Partly as a result of seeing *The Jam*, I went to the **El Mocambo** a couple of weeks ago with the intention of catching **McDonald and Rush** live downstairs, but ended up going to **Grossman's** instead. Once again I lucked into a great evening,

this time the final set by an outfit called **The Nancy Simmons Band**. Nancy plays clean-lined, straight-out rock'n'roll. She has an enthusiastic, inventive and dedicated band and she so obviously enjoys what she's doing — which is writing, performing (on rhythm guitar) and singing cracker-jack rock songs that are sophisticated, raunchy and appealing — that she carried the audience right with her into three encores and had Ozzie climbing the establishment's venerable walls. Nancy comes originally from London Ont. and is playing about town now. She's well worth seeing.

Another surprise, somewhat different but no less pleasant, is **Diane Heatherington**, who has a summer-long engagement (now stretched into fall) every Wednesday to Saturday at a place called **Ruby Begonia's**, a *cave* (rhymes with "have") stashed away under the Adelaide Court Theatre. Ruby's is decorated with somebody's idea of nostalgia-chic: old pop signs, licence plates and an eerie, almost life-size plaster bust of Elvis, puffy cheeks and all, that looks as though it was manufactured for use in private devotional grottos. The club features no cover charge, reasonably priced beer and best of all, of course, the lady herself.

Heatherington has undergone a major metamorphosis and is now performing solo, with a pianist. She brings the energy and focus of her rock performances to the looser, more expansive cabaret milieu, where her skills as an actress can be brought into play. She belts out everything with enormous style, from torchy old Marlene Dietrich numbers to her own versions of Toronto soul. She also raps a lot in between numbers and is thoroughly entertaining. Highly recommended.

Both Nancy Simmons and Diane Heatherington were in the audience on August 16th when the new/old **CeeDees** played the **Queen City Tavern**, a former topless emporium that is now home to some of the more original bands in Toronto.

The CeeDees have gone through a shake-up this summer brought on by bass-player and songwriter Doug Cameron's decision to leave the band. Cameron's departure came at what looked like a bad moment. After more than a year's work in Toronto, and more than a few truly memorable gigs (like the Amnesty International Benefit with **Allen Ginsberg** a year ago) the CeeDees had gained a considerable reputation among musi-

cians, and their audience was building slowly but solidly.

There were problems, though. Nick Kent, the original drummer, left to join Martha and the Muffins and the CeeDees filled the slot with occasional drummers like Ben Cleveland and, after an unforgettable first-time gig at the Isabella last November, with Rough Trade's Bucky Berger. Berger clicked with Driedger and Cameron and his connections helped widen the circle of CeeDee admirers. Because of his many commitments, however, he wasn't always available, so the band was hobbled — at least in its search for solid gigs — by a constant scramble for a fill-in drummer.

Still, by spring it looked as though the CeeDees had worked out a *modus vivendi* with Berger and were finally about to take fortune at its flood and record, for posterity, some of the wonderful things that had been happening musically.

Then Doug Cameron made his announcement. I don't pretend to understand the complexities of his decision to quit, but I suspect it had as much to do with the new direction the band was moving in, and the inevitable soul-searching and conflicts that produced, as it did with his decision to devote his time and talents to the B'hai faith.

Whatever the reason, Curtis Driedger, who plays lead guitar and wrote all the material on the CeeDee's debut album, wasted no time in sentimental sorrow and set about almost at once to put together a new band. He was gratified, he said, to discover that a lot of good bass players were asking to try out, a sign of the respect the CeeDees had won. His only concern was whether he could carry a whole evening with his own material with Cameron's songs out of the repertoire.

I missed the new/old CeeDees' debut in the **Beverley** in late July, but the Queen City session on August 16 confirmed that indeed, the old magic is there. Curtis had a few new songs of his own, and in addition to Tommy Griffiths on bass, he had Nick Kent back on drums with supplementary percussion from Billy Bryans.

Inevitably, the music has a different flavour to it, but Curtis's songs still sparkle with dry wit, radiate joy and compassion and fill the dance floor, and he has proved, to me at least, that the mantle of the CeeDees is safe with him. As long as he is writing and performing, the saga of one of the province's finest bands will continue.

## STEEL PULSE: RIVETING REGGAE by I. Harry

I saw the great young White Toronto working class (read: middle class without jobs) embrace Black reggae music to its breast Aug. 19 at the **Steel Pulse** concert at the Concert Hall as, 2,000-strong, the audience danced up and down in closely packed formation for close to two hours to the British band's original beat.

Looking down from the crammed balcony (is that place safe?) onto the stage and dance floor, one saw a mass of bobbing bodies, each having about one square foot of floor on which to dance an individual reggae skank sashay. The mass was about 95% White, for those who like numbers, with Rastas sprinkled throughout the hall: having desegregated performance halls anyway, they stand like sentinels; they can enjoy themselves here. The music is old-new, roots-progressive; the concert a sweeping opus, an ode (if you listen to the concert as a whole) to working people: swirling up, bottoming out, hitting all the highs and lows of life, feet planted on the ground. Steel Pulse plays what can best be described as working people's blues and soul. Reggae is the backbone of the sound, but the music leads from there into a deeper feeling of solidarity with all the toilers of this (urbanized) world through musical analysis (and synthesis) of painful suffering in an ongoing struggle.

Other universal themes in music are also enmeshed into the reggae theme: gospel, revival, 40's big bands, anthems. The reggae theme urges us to keep on trodding, keep upful, and the action of trodding together will eventually bring about salvation for the working man (keep on keeping on). Blues keeps the painful note within earshot; soul gives us the depth of feeling that comes from suffering and surviving. Steel Pulse has incorporated these musics into their sweeping music, which is bittersweet: the stuff of proletarian revolutions. It is irresistible as a combination to inspire action.

Steel Pulse music fulfilled many purposes for the crowd. The men on stage exuded what seemed like a show of faith in the future if the future's in the right hands. As **David Hinds** (leader who writes the songs) called out, 40 toutsan' babylons can't down us, and he meant everyone present. The gist of this refrain is sinking in now because things have gotten suitably hard in this country. It was also a spiritual gathering, of the kind Bob Marley used to

stage, to banish moral bankruptcy and vague beliefs. The band's message of understanding and solidarity with everyone's problems was being transplanted into the audience who were reinforcing the feeling by swaying to the music. Imagine Toronto sophists repeating: "Chant a psalm a day!" I mean! But the reason they do it is because of the music, which is the most infectious music around. Imagine not being able to hear it on the radio! Laugh!

*Rally Round (the Red, Gold, Black, and Green)* became an anthem of nationalism for Zion, the place that lives in fertile imaginations as that green valley where people shall be eminently reasonable. The notion of repatriation became clear of misconceptions, to become the ideal of returning to simpler places, simpler times, acknowledging one's roots as far back as possible, right to that delta in Ethiopia where it all began for everyone.

The "toney" sound of Steel Pulse firmly establishes the band as British; the vocals are elegant and polished, the harmonies being like that of the Andrews Sisters at times; simply melodious, very smooth, and capable of melting hearts. The inflections had the effect of plunging us into a fondly-remembered past, while the music is modern, dissonant, rolling, daring. The inheritance of British rock comes with the band, with some subtle allusions to acid rock in the keyboards, faint influences of suave sounds. The reggae bass and drum beat, the African percussion, the blues guitar; it's a call to dance, to exorcise life's problems by acknowledging their existence and creating solutions.

When the concert was at its peak, with the music, concerto-like, swelling and building its central climax, it was as though Steel Pulse had given the audience a gift of their deep, resonant knowledge of the mutuality of life. Like truly classical music, Steel Pulse music is definitive, and sets new standards by which to measure the evolution of the form. Therefore, you could hear all the components that have gone into the form until now, creating almost an "apotheosis" of form and feeling as you listened.

Watching everyone get carried away, I thought, well if the words don't get them, the music will. Is this another trendy onslaught, as Hinds knows (Reggae bandwagon is/ The fashion that's going around), and if so, does this mean the audience isn't really listening, just making the scene?

Steel Pulse made sure the huge crowd got the

message: one wore the absurd terrible robes of the KKK in the final number; the band easily convinced the audience to shout back *recherché* Jamaican patois expressions ("stylee"); and Hinds' infectious pleas (Rejoice rejoice/Good tidings I bring to you) left no confusion as to the mood of the rally. The band's four guide words are not for naught: Simplicity (in the message); discipline (in the music); modesty (in presentation); and love (you get a lot out of a Steel Pulse concert.)

## CLASSICAL REGGAE DEPT:

**Heartland Reggae**, the film directed by Toronto's **Jim Lewis**, touches on an unwritten chapter in Jamaican politics, when all the goodwill on the island couldn't stop another bloody election or the attendant political hooliganism, set-ups, murders, bribes, cover-ups.

The number of persons in the film who are no longer alive is large: many, like **Claudie Massop** and **Bucky Marshall**, the instigators of the **Peace Concert**, victims of the political system they had challenged. **Trevor Phillips**, Chairman of the Peace Council, is in jail. The lines of political demarcation were (are) fierce. In the film, the late **Jacob Miller** sings a song of tribute, naming the young peacemakers, while later **Peter Tosh** cynically sneers at "400 years of Bucky Marshall philosophy."

Jacob Miller proves to be reggae's best clown, with a burlesque act full of incongruities like smoking a huge spliff wearing a policeman's cap and cut-off army pants while singing "give the government his hat..."

**Bob Marley** emerges a classic, touching in his ingenuity on stage, holding aloft the hands of Manley and Seaga for the audience of 30,000 to see. He dances like a puppet (with strings manipulated by Jah) in the half-light with his two sons dancing in the foreground, softly singing *Jah Live, Children, Yeah*. True, I-ah!

The Ontario Board of Censors has slapped *Warning: Controversial Lifestyle* onto the film.

I would just like to know why **Heartland Reggae** gets it, and not, say (just picking at random from **The Sunday Sun's Movies** column by Bruce Kirkland) *Lola* ("...Fassbinder burned himself out through excesses, especially in drugs. His characters here do it through the corruption of politics, sex, and booze"), which rates Adult Accompaniment under 14. How about **Friday The 13th Part III** ("...a religion of murder and

mayhem"), which rates *Warning: Brutal violence, frightening scenes*. Or **Summer Lovers** ("...a fantasy ménage à trois becomes a surprising reality for youths on a Greek holiday"), which also rates Adult Accompaniment under 14. Surely a *ménage à trois* is a little controversial, even in these post-liberated times? No, it isn't.

Some meaningless and degrading films around town promote greed, pornography, debasement of the human spirit, fear, low comedy, murder, terror, child prostitution, brutal sex, and drug abuse, and all you have to do is wait until you're fifteen to see them. But are they *controversial*? Hell no. *Smoking pot* is controversial, obviously, to the Censor Board. But wait: you can watch old Cheech and Chong movies, and they smoke pot until they're blue in the face. Controversial? No, not in this case. Black pot-smoking musicians portrayed in their own country singing to huge audiences that clearly enjoy them? Now, *that's* controversy for ya.

What would you call it? I call it racism.

\*\*\*

Master vocalist **Winston Rodney**, also known as **Burning Spear**, will have been at The Music Hall on Wednesday, September 15. An eight-piece band is travelling with Spear. This rare appearance should focus a lot of deserved attention on Spear, a brilliant singer whose evocative voice combines moving historical images with a nostalgia for the daily details of life.

\*\*\*

In July, **Music and Video Week**, the trade publication from England, announced in a news item that the BBC Radio in Merseyside had launched "the first regular radio spot in the area dedicated to reggae or contemporary jazz." The programme is one hour a week on Mondays and is called *Jamming and Jazz*. It is reported to be one of the more popular of the station's music programmes.

\*\*\*

Later that same month, *Music and Video Week* published a photo of **Prince Charles** on their cover, presenting the top prize to the band that won The Prince's Trust Band Competition: **Unity**, a dread-locked reggae band from London. Later that week, Unity played a Rock Gala with Madness, Pete Townshend, and Joan Armatrading.

\*\*\*

And finally, **The Toronto Sun** printed an item about a band of Rastafarians called **Afrikan Dreamland** who play out of Nashville. Talk about never-before-imagined crossovers!



**UP (DOWN, IN AND OUT) DATE**  
**Ex-Manager of The Plastic People Jailed for**  
**3 1/2 Years**  
**by Paul Wilson**

The undeclared war in Czechoslovakia waged by the regime against that country's rock-oriented unofficial youth culture has recently been escalated. In July, Ivan Jirous, a journalist and ex-manager of **The Plastic People of the Universe**, the oldest Czech underground rock band and no strangers to jail themselves, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in a maximum security prison.

Jirous was arrested last fall along with four other men. All were charged with committing a breach of public order by being involved in the publication and distribution of an underground *samizdat* magazine called VOKNO. The magazine was a forum for work by young writers, artists and photographers, and it kept its public informed on what was going on in Czechoslovakia's embattled musical underground.

In addition, Jirous and one of the other men, Michal Hybek, were charged with the possession of marijuana, an unusual accusation in Czechoslovakia where the plant is not generally available. Hybek was also charged with the possession of a firearm.

The trial took place in Chomutov, a mining town in North-Western Bohemia notorious for its hard-nosed and vindictive secret police force. The regime spread the hearings out over a month, beginning on June 18th and ending on July 9th, to try and diffuse the glare of publicity that frequently accompanies the trials of writers and musicians. There were four days of hearings in all.

According to a report issued by VONS, the Prague-based Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted, none of the charges were satisfactorily proven. Both Jirous and Hybek denied possessing or using marijuana, and Jirous testified that a policeman "found" the marijuana after rummaging in a pile of spices in the hallway of Jirous's home. According to Jirous, the officer lifted a paper bag out of the pile with the words: "Here's the marijuana!" When called as a witness, the officer was unable to explain his on-the-spot identification, saying only that it could be assumed that someone like Jirous would have a supply of marijuana at home.

A judicial expert called to testify said, under cross-examination, that it is practically impossible to identify a plant with any certainty from a mixture of crushed, dried leaves and stems.

Court experts found the magazine VOKNO to be of an "anti-social nature", although their report made no reference to any concrete article or contribution, nor did it make any effort to substantiate the claim. There was no proof that any of the accused had participated in the distribution of the magazine.

Hybek's "firearm" turned out to be an air-pistol converted for use with live ammunition, although the weapon had been inoperable for a number of years.

Despite the fact that none of the charges were substantiated by any evidence, the judge found all defendant's guilty as charged. In addition to Jirous' sentence — the heaviest — the others were given prison terms ranging from 15 months (Milan Fric) to 2 1/2 years (Frantisek Starek). Hybek was given 18 months.

Jirous has spent over four of the past 8 years in prison for his involvement with the Czech musical underground. He will be sent to the notorious maximum security prison at Valdice in Eastern Bohemia. According to Ales Brezina, a Czech conscientious objector now living in Toronto, who spent 2 1/2 years in Czech prisons, Valdice is a Czech Millhaven, reserved for men convicted of crimes of violence and espionage and for many-time offenders. The average sentence is about 20 years, and the roughly 3000 inmates are allowed one visit per year by immediate relatives, and a kilogram parcel.

According to the VONS report, Starek and Jirous are also required to spend two years under "protective surveillance" (a kind of parole) after

completing their sentences.

All the defendants have appealed the decision. No date has been set as yet for the hearing.

In Vienna, Vratislav Brabenec, exiled sax player for the Plastic People (see the last issue of SHADES) has announced a series of demonstrations calling for the release of Ivan Jirous, Frantisek Starek, Michal Hybek and Milan Fric. "This time," said Brabenec, "the authorities seem to be out to totally liquidate Jirous. It's not beyond their power to arrange for him simply never to come back."

Brabenec issued an appeal to all friends and supporters of The Plastic People to demonstrate and protest on behalf of Jirous and his friends in front of the nearest Czechoslovak embassy.

Demonstrations have been scheduled in a number of countries in the West, hopefully to coincide with the appeal trial, whose date has not yet been set.

In Canada, the tentative date is early October in Ottawa, possibly to coincide with Prisoner of Conscience week being held by Amnesty. A Benefit concert is also being planned, involving bands from Ottawa and possibly Toronto.

SHADES readers who wish to register their protest at the imprisonment of Ivan Jirous are invited to sign the following petition and send it to SHADES.

**President Dr. Gustav Husak,**  
**Praha-Hrad,**  
**Prague 11908 Czechoslovakia**

Dear Dr. Husak,

As musicians, performers, writers, artists and concerned individuals, we would like to draw your attention to the fate of Ivan Jirous, art critic, rock journalist and former manager of the Czechoslovak rock group **The Plastic People of the Universe**.

Jirous, along with three other men (Frantisek Starek, Michal Hybek and Milan Fric) has been sentenced to three-and-a-half years in a maximum security prison on charges of disturbing the peace and drug possession. We believe that the charges are false, and that Jirous and his friends have been sentenced unjustly.

Jirous has spent over four of the past eight years in prison. His only "crime" has been his active and outspoken support for unofficial music and culture in Czechoslovakia.

This time, Jirous and his friends were accused of putting out a mimeographed magazine called VOKNO (Window) that presented the work of young writers, artists and musicians. Their arrest and trial highlight the fact that in your country, there are hundreds of musicians and other artists who are not permitted to perform or present their work in public, and who often have no access to rehearsal space or to the instruments they need simply because they refuse to conform to official standards.

When they do try to perform for their friends — even in private — they are harassed by the police, arrested, interrogated, expelled from school or thrown out of work, and some are even beaten, tortured or driven out of the country. Those who refuse to be terrorized are thrown into prison.

All, whether in jail or not, live in an atmosphere of physical intimidation and fear.

There is an irony here that does not escape us. If Black (and White) musicians in the West had been thrown in prison every time they tried to make unusual music, there would be no blues, no jazz, no rhythm and blues, no rock and roll, no popular or experimental music at all, as we know it.

By putting musicians and artists in prison for what they create, you are locking up the future.

We urge you, therefore, to grant an amnesty to Ivan Jirous and his friends, and to all other prisoners of conscience in your country.

More than that, we urge you — in the name of our own future as well — to abandon these insane cultural policies that put your best creative minds in jail and condemn whole generations to a future of fugitive pleasures.

Ivan Jirous and his friends must go free.

**CITY MINDS, COUNTRY HEARTS**

Conspiracy Theatre's production of Sam Shepard's **The Mad Dog Blues** (at the **Theatre Centre** on King St. W. until Sept. 5) was a curious mixture of innocence and experience, the kind of thing that is so typically American Canadian actors often have a difficult time getting a proper handle on it.

The play is a grab-bag fantasy (strongly influenced by the spirit of the psychedelic era, in which anything could be made to appear related to anything else) in which two real people, Kosmo, a dreamy, dissatisfied rock star (Ben Cleveland) and Yahoodi, his junked-out musician friend (Roger McKeen) get sucked by their own longings into a matinee adventure serial starring an array of folk heroes, fairy-tale characters and cult figures like Paul Bunyan, Captain Kidd, Jesse James, Marlene Dietrich and Mae West. Against the back-drop of a hippie cold-water flat, these figments of the popular imagination take over and the whole bunch of them go on a mad treasure hunt, each of them defining his or her real attitude to life in the quest for wealth — the quintessential American plot-line if there ever was one. The treasure, of course, turns out to be more pop detritus (literally) and all the characters end up going home, having looked evil in the eye and found themselves.

**The Mad Dog Blues** is American through and through, and despite some fine talent in the cast (Francois-Regis Klonfer tops the list as a warm, bright-eyed guitar-pickin' itinerant who believes he is the reincarnation of Jimmy Rogers, and Hummer Sister Jennifer Deane is charming as Dietrich), the final effect was far less bombastic and full-blown than I think Shepard intended. To work, the plays needs huge performances by actors who can handle convincingly the enormous exaggeration of ordinary human qualities that superstars and folk heroes represent. There is no reason why Canadian actors couldn't do a Shepard play well, but to carry it off they would have to develop a style of acting that reflected the way the Hollywood illusion penetrates everyday reality in the United States. We tend to think that because we're inundated by the same mass culture, it has the same effects here. But it doesn't, and the wide gap I felt between the actors and their material is, I think, an indication of that.

Alan Booth, of the Maja Bannerman Band, wrote the original music for this production. The direction was by Simon Malbogat.

\*\*\*

Ted John's **Country Hearts**, a musical comedy set in a Southwestern Ontario, small town bar, is a whole civilization away from **The Mad Dog Blues**. Featuring two of Toronto's authentic cult figures, Robert Nasmith and Marien Lewis in leading roles, the play could be described as the hit of this year's **Blyth Summer Festival** if it weren't for the fact that just about every play they've run there for the past few years has been a hit. But Blyth, Ontario is a very special phenomenon in theatre, and Ted John's plays occupy a kind of pride of place in that phenomenon, since it is one of John's passions to articulate in his work the strangeness and the humour he finds in the people among whom he grew up — the majority of the Blyth audiences — and it's not surprising they love him for it.

**Country Hearts** is a somewhat unusual play for Ted, not only because he's dealing with music — a very tricky thing to weave into a play and still

maintain the kind of naturalism his work depends on — but also because for the first time he has not built his play around issues and ideas, either those that cause open conflict in the community (like his one-man show on the teachers' strike of '78), or those that simmer below the surface, as in his highly unusual treatment of nuclear power in **St. Sam of the Nuke Pile** in 1980. Even **He Won't Come in from the Barn**, John's salute to the irascible, fed-up farmers of Huron County, was prickly with contemporary bones of contention.

**Country Hearts** ignores the world outside almost entirely. The characters reflect what is going on beyond the snow-bound hotel where they are all stranded, but they don't talk much about it. Instead, like most of us, they are preoccupied with their personal relationships. And there is a force that threatens to disrupt their life: George the bartender (played by Robert Nasmith) suddenly decides he has to raise the tone of his establishment, and this means that everyone's world is threatened, both staff and regulars alike. Boomer, the loveable town lush (William Dunlop) will no longer be allowed into the bar because his amiably boorish antics aren't tolerated by the boss. Zip the resident musician (played by Cape Breton fiddler Marcel Doucet, formerly of Minglewood) is about to be bumped by a class C&W act from the big city and even his woman, the waitress (Janet Amos) is thinking of packing it in. All their eccentricities, tenderly cultivated in the beery tolerance of the bar, are about to be stamped on and eliminated in the name of a spurious progress.

As the storm rages outside, the band, called **Sam Slick and the Slowpokes** (with Marien Lewis as a cockily sensual Sam, and John Rutter and Sandy Crawly as sidepersons) straggle in one by one, along with a rich real-estate agent and his mistress (Claude Rae and Patricia Vanstone) who have been stranded on the road, and Snag (Robert King), a prodigal son of the town who returns unexpectedly to his fiancée (Denise Kennedy) after striking out in Alberta. From this raw mixture of locals and strangers, Johns conjures up a new micro-society that is taut with sexual and social tension. The result is a comedy not about issues, but about a place; the small world of the bar and the people in it.

The play comes to a wonderful after-hours climax when the bartender gets himself locked up in a broom closet and people start using the bar as it was meant to be used — a place to bare their souls and live out their fantasies. Secrets are revealed, passions flare and relationships are upset until George escapes from his closet and brings them all back down to earth in a tremendous dénouement speech. He comes to realize that his own misguided ambitions, far from raising the tone of the place, were destroying the very things that made it most valuable.

The music, by John Roby (who scored the **Theatre of the Film Noir**) is light and catchy, and mostly in a C&W vein (there is also a good R&B song about Highway 401 and a delicate guitar and fiddle duo that knocked me out). Director Richard Greenblatt blends the songs almost seamlessly into the action, the few exceptions being dream-like sequences when the cast is choreographed through numbers that are pure artifice. Moments like that are effective pieces of theatre, and the audience is transported by them, so it makes me feel a bit like Scrooge to say I felt they distracted from the flow of the piece.

But no matter. **Country Hearts** beat with rich humour and warm vitality during its August run at the Blyth Summer Festival, and it would be a pity to leave it at that.

Paul Wilson


Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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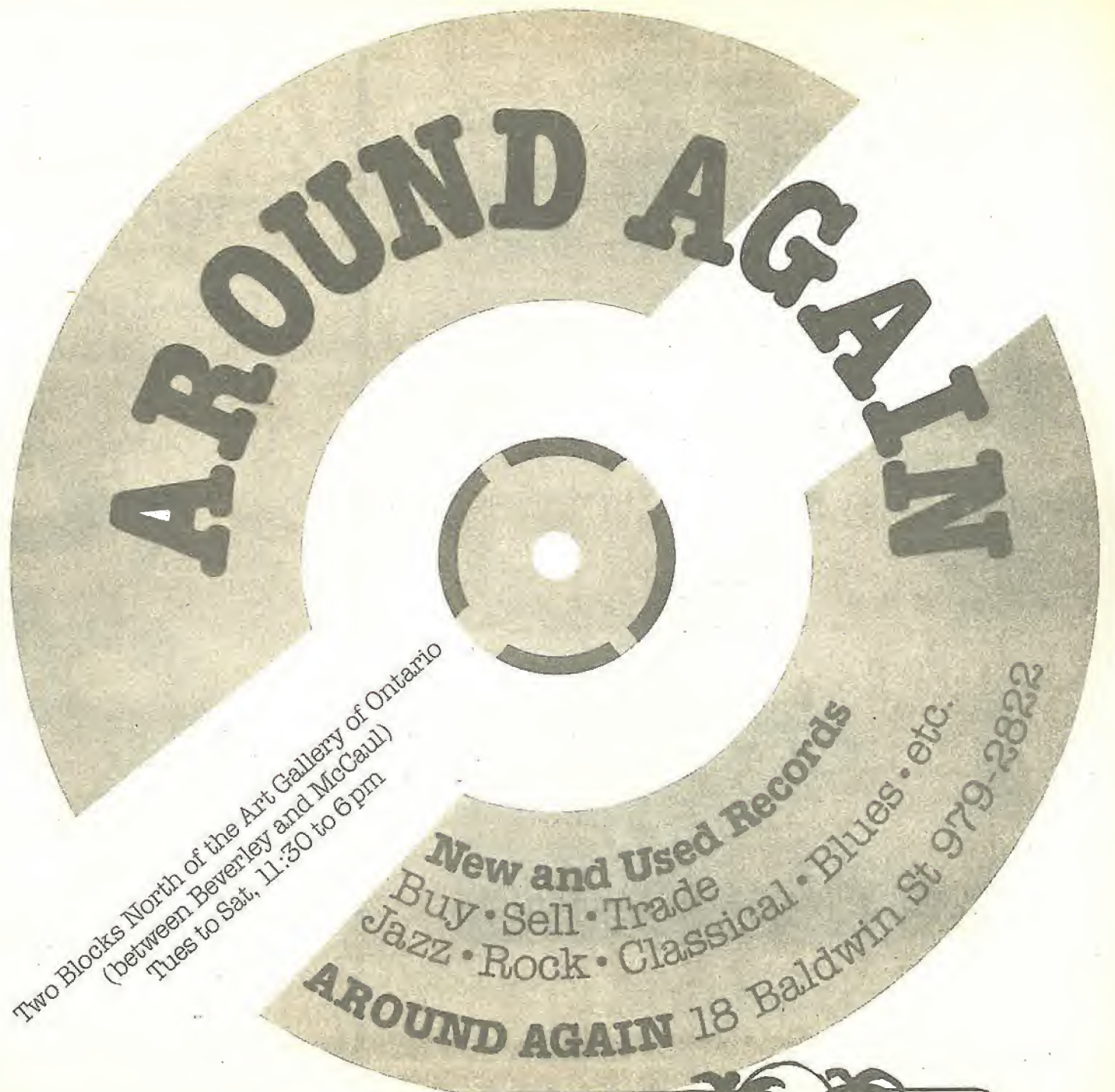
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Oct. 10 — Handsome Ned and the Running Kind  
Oct. 12 — Robert Priest Band Oct. 13, 14 — from  
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Oct. 15 — Poetry A Go Go, featuring bill bissett,  
Gwen MacEwen, Michael Ondaatje, David  
McFadden and 8 other prominent Canadian poets  
Oct. 16 — Poetry A Go Go, featuring Susan  
Musgrave, Gerry Gilbert, members of The Four  
Horsemen, Doug Jones and 8 other prominent  
Canadian poets Oct. 17 — Le Moment du Mot,  
featuring Lucien Francoeur, Pauline Harvey,  
Daisy Debolt and 10 other prominent French  
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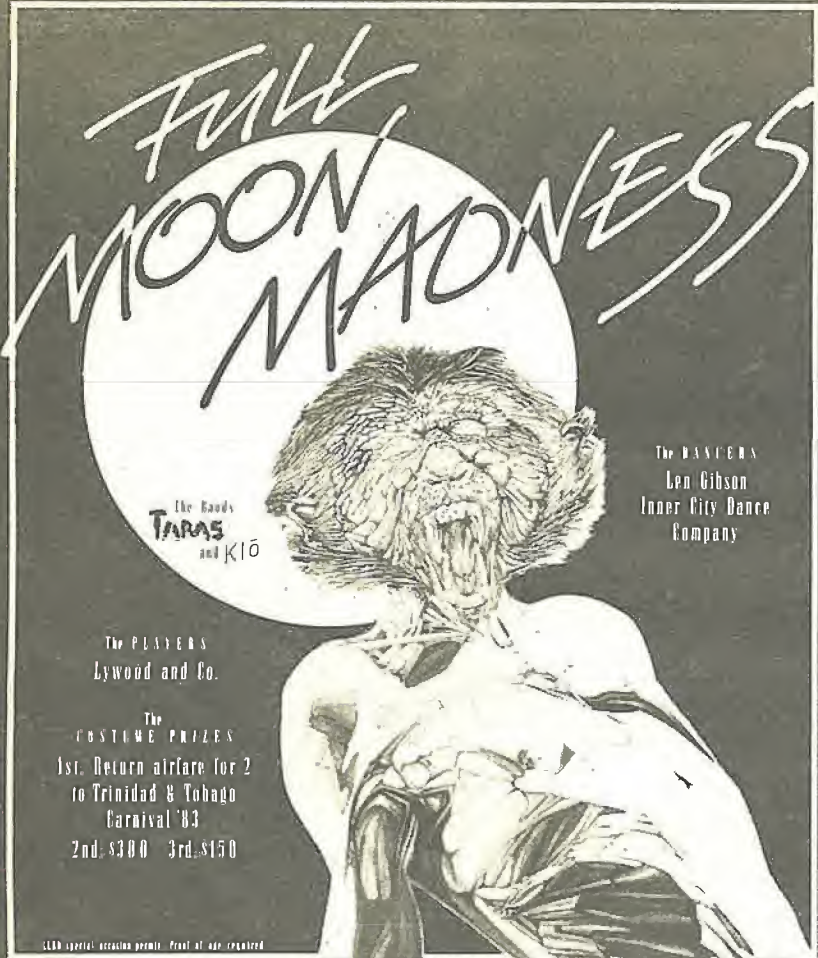


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Oct. 14	Q107: Morgan Davis Band (Dancing)	3.00
Oct. 15	CHUM: Santers (Dancing)	4.00
Oct. 16	CHUM: Boys Brigade (Dancing)	5.00
Downstairs All Week: The Cee Dee's		
Oct. 22	Q107: Teenage Head (2 shows, 7:00 and 11:00)	8.00/9.00 Door
Downstairs All Week: Nancy Simmonds with Keith Glass		
Oct. 25	CHUM: Cradney, Clayton & Hayward (formerly of Little Feat) (2 Shows, 7:00 and 11:00)	7.50
Oct. 27 (Dancing)	The Arrows	TBA
Oct. 28	Q107: Oliver Heaviside (Dancing)	3.00
Oct. 29	Long John Baldry (Dancing)	5.00
Oct. 30	CHUM: Coney Hatch (Dancing)	5.00

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**D & C**  
October 27

**GREEN DOLPHIN**  
November 11

**BAD TASTE**  
November 24

Tickets are half price if bought before opening night.

16 Ryerson Ave.  
Box Office: 363-2416

## HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN RECORD

**CAPAC presents two seminars  
on the independent  
record business**



### IN TORONTO . . .

**Saturday November 20 and Sunday November 21  
9 a.m. - 6 p.m.**

**O.I.S.E. Auditorium, 252 Bloor Street W.**

Speakers will include leading Canadian and American producers, independent record label heads, artists, and promotion people.

A similar programme will be presented each day, but there will be two different sets of speakers each day.

Tickets are \$15 per day. Complete details available from CAPAC, 1240 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario.

Telephone Richard Flohil (416) 925-3154.

Registration will be limited; plan to attend now.

### IN WINNIPEG . . .

**Saturday October 23  
9 a.m. - 6 p.m.**

**Winnipeg Art Gallery Theatre**

Speakers include producer Jack Richardson; independent label heads Al Mair, Holger Peterson, and Scott Richards; artists Heather Bishop, Ray St. Germain and Duck Donald; and many well-known Winnipeg recording studio experts.

Tickets are \$15. Complete details available from Rosalie Goldstein, #8, 222 Osborne St. S., Winnipeg. Telephone (204) 453-2985. Registration is limited.

